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IN

BAPTIST HISTORY:

A COLLECTION OF
INTERESTING, INSTRUCTIVE, AND CURIOUS INFORMATION,
NOT GENERALLY KNOWN,

Concerning the Baptist Denomination.

BY THE
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AUTHOR OF "TIMELY WORDS."

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PREFACE.

THE footpaths of any country may be expected to yield some glimpses, both of the land and the people, not obtainable along the dusty and well-beaten highway. It is sincerely hoped that this may prove equally true of these *Bye-paths in Baptist History*. That they occasionally cross the main roads, and now and then run parallel with them, is no more than other "Bye-paths" have done before them; but care has been taken throughout to preserve, as much as possible, their distinctive character.

In the sketches thus given of the Early English Baptists, no attempt has been made to diminish their excellencies or to gloss over their defects. Their early and persistent advocacy of the broadest religious freedom (an honour of which none will now seek to rob them); their zealous regard for Scriptural precedents; and their willingness to sacrifice all things in the maintenance of what they deemed to be the truth, commend them to the warmest sympathies and loving regard of their descendants. Nor should their disputatious and angular character; their literal observance of customs now fallen into desuetude, and their vigorous and inquisitorial discipline, be

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judged apart from the ferment of the age in which they lived, their natural reaction against the commandments of men, and their steadfast desire that those who associated with them should live unblamable and unreprovable before God.

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CHAPTER I.

EARLY TRACES OF BAPTISTS IN BRITAIN.

"THE true origin of Anabaptists," says Mosheim, "is hid in the remote depths of antiquity." But there is no reason to doubt that as early as the Third Century Baptists already existed in Britain. At that period "no persons were admitted to baptism by the churches generally"—still to quote Mosheim—"but such as had been previously instructed in the principal points of Christianity, and had also given satisfactory proofs of pious dispositions and upright intentions." Coupling with this testimony the statement of *Tertullian*, the celebrated African writer, that in 209 "those parts of Britain into which the Roman arms never penetrated have yielded subjection to Christ," we are warranted in saying that the early British Christians were men holding the distinctive principles of Baptists.

We have no further trace of Baptists in these islands until the Fifth Century, although there existed, during the interval, as we learn from various sources, a numerous, well-ordered, and flourishing Christian community. In the year 410, the Britons were not only harassed and oppressed by the Saxons, but were distracted by religious controversies. Pelagius, who had once been a monk at Bangor, in North Wales, succeeded in spreading the poison of his opinions among his fellow-

countrymen. Among these opinions was the belief in the lawfulness and necessity of infant-baptism. Two zealous bishops from the Continent laboured to check the progress of Pelagius' opinions, and many wanderers were reclaimed and baptized in the river Allen, near Chester.

The third trace of Baptists in Britain is found in the time of Ethelbert. Again the Principality claims the honour of having sheltered and preserved, if it did not originate, some of the earliest Baptist confessors in this country; but the claim rests upon an obscure passage in the Chronicle of the Venerable Bede, and upon a version of Bede's words found in Fabyan's *New Chronicles of England and France*, a book published in the time of Henry the Seventh, and which had the honour of being burnt in the following reign by order of Cardinal Wolsey. We give the story in which the passage occurs, and for two reasons: first, it reveals the Scriptural character of the Christianity of Britain before the time of Romish corruptions; and secondly, it shows with what sturdy independence these early Christians rejected the arrogant pretensions of Rome.

But to the story of

Austin and the Monks of Bangor.

Austin, or Augustine, the abbot of a monastery founded in Rome by Gregory the Great (although the pope's title to the term is very questionable), was sent into England in 596 to convert the Saxons. The Abbot proceeded with becoming caution at the outset, lived in a humble and self-denying fashion, and revealed no part of his future policy. His success far exceeded his expectations. Camden tells us that multitudes confessed their belief in his doctrines, and, going into the water, were dipped in the name of the Trinity. So far there was a concession to what was known to have been the practice of the early British Churches. Gregory now sends Austin further help, chiefly monks, with one Mellitus as their abbot. They bring with them presents for King Ethelbert, an arch-

bishop's pall for Austin, some copies of portions of the Scriptures, certain Romish devotional books, relics to be used in the consecration of new churches, and Gregory's very trenchant replies to Austin's puerile questions. With more liberality, or with more policy than Austin, Gregory, among other things, suggests that in settling the order of the new church which had been founded in England, Austin should not exclusively follow the example of Rome, but should select whatever was good, no matter where he might find it—a sentiment deserving of special notice as coming from the mouth of a Roman bishop.

Austin now makes Canterbury the seat of the first English archbishopric; becomes very zealous, with his new monkish staff of supporters, in winning over the Saxons; sprinkles the heathen temples with holy water, at least such temples as he could obtain; sanctifies them, after the Romish fashion, by making them the shrines of certain relics—bones and rags of Romish saints; converts the said heathen temples into churches; establishes festivals in honour of the saints whose relics are henceforth preserved in them, taking care, as Gregory also advised him, that the times and the ceremonies of these new festivals should be made as palatable as possible to the half-heathenish Saxons, so that they might be the more easily persuaded to substitute the new rites for the old.

Austin's ambition increases with his success. This "pretended apostle and sanctified ruffian," as Jortin styles him, with something of passionate abuse, lusts after the sole and undivided ecclesiastical sway over the whole island. But how was he to secure the realisation of his dreams? A large and flourishing body of British Christians were now living in Wales, whither they had sought refuge from the cruelties of the Saxons. Undisturbed in their liberties and their worship in the fastnesses of Wales, they had waxed stronger and stronger. At Caerleon, in the south, and at Bangor-is-y-coed, in the north, large and flourishing monasteries, or, more properly speaking, missionary stations, were established. Bangor

alone could number, in association with it, over two thousand "brethren." These societies had little in common with Romish monasteries, either of that age or of the following. The greater part of "the brethren" were married laymen, who followed their worldly calling, and those among them who showed aptitude for study and missionary work were permitted to give themselves to the reading of the Scriptures and holy services. All were maintained out of a common fund, and yet a large surplus was distributed in the shape of food and clothing to the neighbouring poor.

Austin's problem was this: how best to obtain ecclesiastical authority over these primitive British Christians? Ethelbert suggested and arranged a conference with some of their leading men. The conference was accordingly held in Worcestershire, near what was still called, in the days of Bede, "Austin's Oak." The British clergy of the province adjoining were invited, and Deynoch, the distinguished abbot of Bangor, a man in great repute for his piety and learning, came with them. Austin opened the conference by stating his desire that, as good Christian men, the people in Wales should submit themselves to the Pope of Rome, as the Father of fathers, and to himself as his duly accredited representative. Deynoch's reply is every way remarkable: "We are ready to listen to the Church of God, to the Pope of Rome, and to every pious Christian; so that we may show to each, according to his station, perfect love, and uphold him by word and deed. We know not that any other obedience can be required of us towards him whom you call the pope, the Father of fathers. But this obedience we are constantly prepared to render to him, and to every other Christian."

Nothing came of this conference, so far as Austin was concerned. The Welsh asked that, previous to deciding what further reply to give, a larger number of their own party might be present. A second conference was, therefore, determined upon; but before attending it, the Welsh consulted a pious

hermit, who was held by them in the greatest veneration. "May we obey this Austin?" asked the simple-minded Welsh. "Yes," answered the hermit, "if he be a man of God." "But how are we to know that?" The hermit answered, "If he be meek and lowly in spirit, after the pattern of our Lord, he will himself, being a disciple of Christ, bear the Master's yoke, and put no heavier burden upon you. But if he be violent, and of overbearing spirit, it is plain that he is not born of God; and you will do well not to heed his words." Still the enquirers were not satisfied. Like so many others, they wanted some outward and visible sign by which to judge of Austin's character; and again they pressed the hermit to help them. "By what token, or sign, shall we know that he is a meek and holy man?" The hermit, evidently with a shrewd guess at the sort of man they had to deal with in Austin, responded: "Permit Austin and his attendants to enter first the place of meeting. If, on your entrance, he should at once rise to receive you, he is a servant of Christ. But if he should still remain sitting, notwithstanding the size and character of your company, you cannot so account him." Of course Austin neither answered to the hermit's description of a disciple of Christ, nor showed the hermit's sign of courtesy and humility. He sat stiffly up in his chair of state when the Welsh entered, and at once proceeded to the business of the conference. But the Welsh were in no humour to enter upon any agreement, or even quietly to discuss its terms. The hermit had rightly divined the character of Austin, and the Welsh did not conceal their uneasiness in the prelate's presence. Austin first tries what can be done by concession. "We know, at Rome," said he, "that many of your customs are contrary to ours; but if you will only consent to these three things, we will say nothing about the rest: (1) Alter your time of observing Easter; (2) Administer baptism according to the custom of the Roman Church; (3) And join with me in preaching to the Saxons." Still the Welsh hung back, little loth, by putting their necks under a foreign yoke, to lose their

dearly-bought independence. Austin now changes his tone, and more than justifies the hermit's description of one "not born of God." Cajolery has failed; he will try menace. "Well, well," said Austin, with ill-concealed anger, "if you will not have my blessing, and be brethren, you shall have my curse, and the Saxon's sword." Whereupon the council abruptly broke up, the monks returned to their quiet homes, and Austin comes back to the Saxons to foment further ill-will between them and the Welsh. There is little doubt that, indirectly, Austin is responsible for the cold-blooded massacre by Ethelfrid of upwards of a thousand unarmed monks of Bangor, although, when the dastardly deed was done, the ambitious and revengeful Austin was slumbering in his grave.

Let us now turn, for a moment, to the passage in Bede's *Chronicle*, on account of which the claim already mentioned is set up by the Welsh. It runs as follows: "Ut ministerium baptisandi, quo Deo renascimur, juxta sanctæ Romanæ Apostolicæ ecclesiæ, compleatis." ("That you shall duly administer the rite of baptism, by which we are born again unto God, after the manner of the holy Roman Apostolic Church.") From these words it is evident that there was a marked difference between the mode of administering baptism in use among the Welsh, and that generally adopted by the Roman Church; but what precisely that difference was it is by no means easy to discover. Lingard, the Roman Catholic historian, gives an explanation which Hook, in his *Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury*, contends that he has no actual warrant for making. Lingard says the difference lay in the necessity for confirmation after baptism. Baxter and others contend that it refers to the use in baptism of white garments, milk, and honey. But most Baptists argue that the difference was, not at all as to the *mode* of baptism, but as to the *subjects* who should submit to that ordinance. It is, unquestionably, true, as Gregory the Great tells us, that he himself, and others in Italy, administered baptism by trine immersion ("nos tertio mergi-

mus"), but they also administered it to infants. Whether, however, this last was an actual point in dispute between Austin and the monks of Bangor, we cannot learn from the words of Bede. Dr. Evans and others with him, regard the collateral evidence on the question as distinctly pointing to this issue.

Perhaps the mode of baptism would have been the only question raised by the words of Bede, if D'Anvers had not pointed out that, in the translation of Bede's account given by Fabyan, the second condition of agreement laid down by Austin to the Welsh was this : "*That ye given Christendom to children.*" D'Anvers therefore concluded that Austin wished to force infant baptism upon the Welsh, and this was evidently Fabyan's opinion. Many writers since the days of D'Anvers have followed in his wake ; but, in our judgment, none have succeeded in making more than probable the early Baptist reputation of the Welsh people at the time of the brave old Deynoch and the imperious and bigoted Austin.

The fourth trace we have in English history of the opposition of the people to infant baptism, is in

The Law of Ina.

Towards the close of the Seventh Century, Ina, a Saxon prince, endeavoured to settle the baptism question in a very summary manner. He enacted a law by which all infants, within thirty days of their birth, should be baptized. For any violation of this enactment the penalties were unusually severe. A fine of £30 in our money was imposed upon the parents who did not comply ; and in the event of the child dying unbaptized, their whole personal estate was forfeited. People who had thus to be compelled to have their infants baptized were no great sticklers for its observance.

The three following centuries were religiously as dreary in England as in other countries. They have been rightly called "the dark ages." During this period of gloom, Europe had still its own witnesses to the truth. Passing under different

names—Paulicians, Vaudois or Waldenses, Albigenses, Berengarians, Arnoldists—these godly men kept alive some glimmer of light amidst all this darkness. There were many among them who were opponents of infant baptism. About the Eleventh Century they rapidly multiplied on the Continent, and in the following century came over to England in great numbers. We discover them by

Lanfranc's Opposition to the English Waldenses.

The simplicity of their lives (so different from the pomp and corruption of the Romish clergy of that period), and the purity of their doctrine, led to the rapid increase of their adherents in all parts of the country. Not only were their sentiments warmly adopted by the humbler classes, but also by many of the nobility and gentry of the chief towns and villages. The priests became alarmed, and preyed on the fears of William the Conqueror. It was presently enacted by that energetic Sovereign "that those who denied the Pope should not trade with his subjects." Nor was this all. The able and zealous Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, sought to check the progress of their opinions by publishing a book in opposition to the views held by Berengar and the Waldenses. In this treatise he roundly asserts that these sectaries, "by denying infant-baptism, oppose the general doctrine and universal consent of the Church." It is not on record, so far as we know, that these Waldenses or Berengarians, suffered any direct persecution from William the Conqueror and Lanfranc, although it is hardly probable that the act of William was allowed to remain a dead letter, or that Lanfranc contented himself with hurling words at their heads, if he had it in his power to use harder weapons.

The sixth trace of Baptists in England is found in

Gerard and his Companions.

We are entirely indebted for our information about these thirty men and women to the pens of monkish historians. It

is well to remember this fact, since two important advantages are thereby gained: first, we are better able to test the actual value of their opinions of these so-called heretics; and, secondly, we are forced to the conclusion, since such obviously prejudiced observers could find so little evil in them, that Gerard and his companions were very exemplary Christians.

Their story, as it has come down to us, is sadly too brief. In substance it is this. Henry the Second, King of England, showed, according to Roger de Hovendon, remarkable leniency to the Waldenses of Aquitaine, Poitou, Gascoigne, and Normandy. The Dutch and Flemish, on the other hand, treated them with the utmost rigour, and burnt many at the stake. Owing to some sudden outburst of persecution in Holland, a number of Waldenses, or as some think them, disciples of Arnold of Brescia, fled to England, hoping thereby to obtain a secure asylum from their cruel persecutors. In this, they were grievously disappointed. Henry was at this period in open rupture with Thomas à Beckett, but was still anxious to stand well with the Pope and the ecclesiastics generally. The poor fugitives, in avoiding Scylla, had fallen into Charybdis. They were presently made the convenient pretext for illustrating the soundness of the King's faith, and his devotion in all matters of doctrine to the "holy Roman Apostolic Church."

No very flattering picture of Gerard and his companions is given by the monks. "They were a company of ignorant rustics;" which means, that they were persons in very humble life. "Their understandings were very gross and unimproved;" although the very reverse seems to be nearer the truth, judging from their general behaviour. "Their obstinacy and self-opinion were such, that the convincing of them by argument, and the retrieving them of their mistake, was next to an impossibility." In other words, they held firmly the opinions they had already received.

But what were their opinions? Strange to say, these "ignorant rustics" did not believe in the Romish doctrine of purgatory. They rejected prayers for the dead. They regarded the invocation of saints as useless. On some points they held orthodox views; but when they came to be examined on the seven sacraments of the Church, to the horror and confusion of their priestly questioners, they were grievously unsound. Marriage, said these men, was no sacrament. The sacrifice of the mass was an abomination. But worse still remained behind; *they rejected the baptism of infants!* What further proof was needed of their "gross and unimproved understandings?"

"On their first landing in England," so the monks assure us, "they concealed their heterodoxy, and pretended other business." But there is no proof from any quarter that they were other than quiet and inoffensive foreigners, who went on with such work as they could obtain. The singularity of their religious opinions, however (for Rome was now in the ascendant), soon became known. The King, prompted by the clergy, whom he was anxious to conciliate, orders their arrest and imprisonment. After some time had elapsed, they are all brought before a synod of priests at Oxford. Gerard was their chief spokesman. "The rest," say the monks, "were altogether unlettered, and perfect boors in knowledge and conversation. Their language was high Dutch." We may perhaps discover in this last circumstance the one secret of their contempt for Gerard's companions. He alone of the whole party was able to converse freely in English.

Gerard was asked, "What were the opinions of himself and his friends?" To which he promptly replied, "We are Christians, and the doctrines of the Apostles are our only rule of faith." This was esteemed but a lame and insufficient answer by the Romish priests; and again they return to the charge. It then came out, one by one, that they held the opinions already stated. "While they were sufficiently

orthodox," say the monks, "about the Trinity and the Incarnation, on many other *material* points they were dangerously mistaken." The priests, seeing the respect paid by Gerard and his friends to the Scriptures, sought to convince them by ingeniously suggested texts, or "old odd ends stolen out of Holy Writ;" but they remained unshaken in their opinions. They were reasoned with. They were admonished. They were threatened. All was in vain. Again and again they were reminded by their priestly judges that "they would be punished for their incorrigibleness;" and at last, say the monks, "they were so unhappy as to misapply that text of our Saviour's to their own case, 'Blessed are they that suffer persecution for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'"

The end was now near. To prevent the spread of "the contagion of their opinions," the priests pronounced them incorrigible heretics, and delivered them over to the secular magistrate. Instigated by the priests, the King ordered them to be branded in the forehead with a red-hot iron; to be whipped through the streets of Oxford; and, after their clothes were cut short at their girdles, to be turned into the open fields, although it was the depth of winter. The inhumanity of this treatment was heightened by the fact that all persons, under the heaviest penalties, were forbidden to offer them any relief. Gerard and his friends were nothing daunted by this severity, but went forth through the city streets, singing as they went, "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you." There could be, however, but one end to their story. The whole company of men and women, with their faithful leader and guide, perished with cold and hunger.

It came out on their trial that only one convert had been won to their faith, a poor woman of humble life. No time was lost by the priests in hunting her out. She was put to the torture; her strength failed her; and, in the anguish of her body, she hastily recanted.

Baptist opinions were held by many of

The Lollards.

It should be remembered that the Paulicians, the Waldenses, the Picards, and the Paterines, were all sometimes designated by this general name. Whatever the origin of the name itself, it has never been questioned that great numbers of the Lollards held Baptist sentiments. It is stated by some early historians that about thirty years after the cruel treatment of Gerard and his companions, Henry the Second so far changed his policy as to permit a company of Waldenses to settle peacefully in Kent, as tenants of the Manor of Darenth, and that in the reign of Edward the Third, colonies of Lollards came into the county of Norfolk. Mosheim affirms that Peter Lollard himself visited this country in the early part of the fourteenth century, and contemporary historians speak of the wide prevalence of Lollard's opinions in England, even before the time of John Wycliffe. There is little doubt that they prepared the way for the general diffusion of that great Reformer's opinions. What

Wycliffe's Opinions on Baptism

were, it is now needful very briefly to state. Taking some passages by themselves, it would not be difficult to claim Wycliffe as a holder, in part, of Baptist opinions. "How necessary the sacrament of Baptism is to the believer," says Wycliffe, "may be seen by the words of Christ to Nicodemus, 'Unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' And such, accordingly, is the authority from Scripture on which believers are customarily baptized." Again, "Chrism and other such ceremonies are not to be used in baptism." Still further, "Baptism doth not confer, but only signify, grace which was given before." Another passage declares, "that those are fools and presumptuous which affirm such infants not to be saved which die without baptism, and that all sins were abolished in baptism." But on this last point Wycliffe contra-

dicts himself, since, in another place, when speaking about a child dying unbaptized, he says, "I hold my peace as one dumb, . . . because it doth not seem to me clear whether such an infant would be saved or lost."

His bitter opponent, Walsingham, speaks in no choice language about his opinions. "That most damnable heretic, John Wycliffe," says Walsingham, "re-assumed the cursed opinions of Berengar, which was, as you have heard, to deny infant baptism and transubstantiation." Walden, who wrote bitterly against the Reformer, terms him "one of the seven heads that rose up out of the bottomless pit, for denying infant baptism, that heresy of the Lollards, of whom he is so great a ringleader." But whatever his enemies' opinions of him, these are his own words in his *Triologues:* "On account of the words of the last chapter in Matthew, our church introduces believers who answer for the infant which has not yet arrived at years of discretion." In another place he thus writes: "Nor is it of moment whether the baptized be immersed once, or thrice, or whether the water be poured upon his head. But the ceremony must be performed according to the usage of the place, and is as legitimate one way as another. For it is certain, that bodily baptism or washing is of little avail, unless there goes with it the washing of the mind by the Holy Ghost from original or actual sin; for herein is a fundamental article of belief, that whenever a man is duly baptized, baptism destroys whatever sin was found in the man." There is still a third opinion expressed about children dying unbaptized. "I think it probable that Christ might, without any such washing, spiritually baptize, and by consequence save infants."

Again, on the validity of baptism, he writes: "When an infidel baptizes a child, not supposing that baptism to be of any avail for his salvation, we are not to regard such a baptism as serviceable to the baptized. Yet we believe that where any old woman or despised person duly baptizes with water, God completes the baptism of the Spirit along with the words of the sacrament."

It will be seen, from these various quotations, that Wycliffe's mind was not entirely free from Popish errors on the subject of baptism; but the half-truths he uttered set other men thinking; and, by the aid of the New Testament, which Wycliffe put into their hands, many of his followers openly avowed distinct Baptist opinions. Especially was this the case with

The Bible-men.

East Anglia, Middlesex, Kent, Hereford, and the Midland Counties, were the chief centres of their influence. Like Berengar, they refused to take their children to the church to be baptized. At Amersham, in Buckinghamshire, where they were numerous during the later half of the Fourteenth Century, they were commonly known by the people as *Just-fast-men*, and *Known-men*, on account of their fidelity to each other during the fierce persecutions they had to suffer. "The heretics and Lollards of Wycliffe's opinions were at first permitted to preach abroad boldly, to gather conventicles unto them, to keep schools in men's houses, to write books, to complete treatises, and write ballads; to teach privately in angles and corners, as in woods, pastures, meadows, groves, and caves in the ground;" the monks attributing their eloquence and ready skill as disputants to the direct help of the devil. The whole country was leavened with Wycliffe's opinions, and the opinions of the Bible-men; and the storm of clerical rage that presently burst over them, while it "rooted out" some of these "evil weeds and offendicles, planted by the new and damnable Lollardie," as the persecuting priests were pleased to call them, still left many disciples untouched by its fury.

The Chesterton Separatists.

It is now our unpleasant duty to mar a very agreeable picture, painted by Robert Robinson, and quoted by nearly every Baptist historian since his day. In a "Brief Dissertation on the Ministry of the Divine Word by Public Preaching," pre-

fixed to the second volume of his translation of Claude's *Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*, Mr. Robinson writes:—

"I have seen enough to convince me that the present English Dissenters, contending for the sufficiency of the Scriptures, and for primitive Christian liberty to judge of its meaning, may be traced back, in authentic manuscripts, to the Nonconformists, to the Puritans, to the Lollards, to the Vallenses (Waldenses), to the Albigenses, and, I suspect, through the Paulicians, and others, to the Apostles. These churches had sometimes a clandestine existence; and at other times a visible, I wish I could say a legal one: but, at all times, they held more truth and less error than the prevailing factions that persecuted them. One branch uniformly denied the baptism of infants; all allowed Christian liberty; and all were enemies to the established hierarchy reigning over the consciences of their brethren." So far Robinson is correct. But when he proceeds to write about certain men, since known as the Chesterton Separatists, he generalises too hastily. His words are:—"I have now before me a manuscript Register of Gray, Bishop of Ely, which proves, that in the year 1457, there was a congregation of this sort in this village, Chesterton, where I live, who privately assembled for Divine worship, and had preachers of their own, who taught them the very doctrine which now we preach. Six of them were accused of heresy before the tyrant of the district, and condemned to abjure heresy, and to do penance, half naked, with a faggot at their backs, and a taper in their hands, in the public market-places of Ely and Cambridge, and in the churchyard of Great Swaffham. It was a pity the poor fools were forced to abjure the twelfth article of their accusation, in which they were said to have affirmed, that '*all priests and people in orders were incarnate devils!*' . . The thirteenth article objected against the above-mentioned Chesterton culprits, by the bishop, in his Consistory at Downton, is this:—'Also, you affirm, that every man may be called a church of God, so that if any one of you should be summoned before

his ecclesiastical judge, and should happen to be asked this question, Do you believe in the Church? he may fairly answer, that he does; meaning that he believes in the Church, becausc he believes the Church is in every man, who is a temple of God.' Now is not this affirming, that every good man was bound to follow his own judgment in religious matters, and not to be set down by a domineering faction, calling themselves *the church?* Is a man strong for being called a Samson, or wise for naming himself Solomon? Does it not mean that every man had as much right of judging in himself solely as the whole community had collectively? We go further, and prove that these six men, although all in one community, did not all hold the same articles; some agreed to one, and some to another. But they all, the Register says, affirmed the thirteenth. Does not this prove that their ecclesiastical economy allowed a Christian liberty, and that they held a mixed communion?"

A recent examination of Gray's Register (still preserved in the University Library of Cambridge, and known as the *Baker Manuscripts*) shows that Robinson consulted the Register hurriedly, and was thus led into several errors. He is right in saying that one of the men who were examined by Bishop Gray, "the tyrant of the district,"* confessed that he had taught and affirmed certain false articles and opinions, and also *that he had been present when such articles and opinions were taught, learned, and affirmed by others.*" In other words, that he and others belonged to a body of men who, if not a church, according to the Prayer-book definition of a church—("a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that are of necessity

* Gray was not destitute of humanity, at least, to those of his own faith Even in his old age, John Capgrave, the chronicler and monk of King's Lynn, "Remembers with what pious attention Gray showed his affection towards him when a wretched pilgrim, and lying ill at Rome."

requisite to the same")—had yet meetings of their own for Divine worship, and teachers among them, judging from the terms of Bishop Gray's indictment, able to express themselves with distinctness and force. But Robinson is wrong in saying that they were six men, and that their meeting was held in Chesterton. The Register mentions but three men, and only one of them lived in the village where Robinson resided at the time of writing his often-quoted words. The names of these men were—John Baile, of Chesterton; Robert Sparke, of Reche, in the parish of Swaffham; and John Crud, *alias* Crowd, of Cambridge.

In addition to the opinions quoted by Robinson, which these men were charged with holding, we may now add some others, especially as they reveal still further the character of their belief. They are charged with asserting "that fasting is not binding on labourers and married people, but only on *clericos et religiosos*—the priests and monks." They affirmed, "that there was no benefit in burial in consecrated ground, and that the money spent thereby would be better applied to the poor than given to gratify the avarice of the priests." They represented transubstantiation as a vain oblation. They declared, "that it was better to confess to a man cut off from the fellowship of the faithful (the Romish Church), than to a priest." They taught, "that as God was the searcher of hearts, mental prayer in the fields was as profitable as oral prayer in a church." They held, concerning marriage, "that the priest's presence was merely required at its celebration for the sake of gain." "Extreme unction," they confessed, "did no good to the soul, and only defiled the body."

Baptists have too readily claimed these men as holding their opinions, since, according to the third count in the indictment, all that they affirmed on this subject was, "that children neither have need of baptism, nor ought they to be baptized, since the baptism of their parents was sufficient." It was, however, by no means uncommon for the Romish clergy in

those days thus to describe the Baptist opinions held by many of the Lollards. Fox, the Martyrologist, himself no great admirer of Baptists, quoting a similar accusation against the Norwich Lollards some years before the date at which Sparke and his friends were examined by Bishop Gray, suggests, "that the thing is so contrary to the manifest word, that it is not to be thought any to be so ignorant of the Gospel that they ever would or did affirm the same." Whether, therefore, these men were Baptists still remains doubtful; but that they were unable to bear the strain put upon them by Bishop Gray is too patent from the Bishop's Register. Robert Sparke was first examined, and endeavoured to defend his opinions; was reasoned with, and recanted. He was nevertheless excommunicated; but on subsequent evidence of repentance, and swearing obedience, he was forgiven, the following penance being imposed:—"That on the eve of Pentecost next you shall walk about the market-place of Ely, when most people were there, wearing only your shirt and breeches (*solis comitia et braccis indutus*), bearing a faggot upon your back, humbly carrying a wax taper in your hand, and declaring publicly the reasons for your penance." On the eve of Trinity next he was to do the same in the Cambridge market. Also, on the next Sunday, after the feast of Corpus Christi, and on the Sunday following that, he was to do penance in like manner in the parish church of Swaffham. Sparke was compelled to swear "that from that hour he would neither hold nor propagate any opinion against orthodoxy; nor in any way favour such, nor yet go to *conventicalæ illicitæ*, unlawful conventicles;" a clear proof that such Conventicles did actually at that time exist; but not that one existed at Chesterton, where Robinson was living at the time he quotes "Gray's Register." The sentences on Crowd and Baile were similar, save that the places of church penance were Cambridge and Chesterton.*

* From the *Paston Letters*, a few quotations illustrating the national and social history of England at this time (1457) may be given. One, William

Before leaving the *Baker Manuscripts*, in which the above facts are recorded, it may not be uninteresting to give another quotation referring to events which happened about twenty-six years (1431) before the date of Bishop Gray's examination of Sparke and his friends. It appears, from this entry, that a proclamation had been issued by Henry the Sixth, "against certain heretics and Lollards." They are charged with holding "errors tending to the subversion of religion and government, and with circulating false and seditious tracts (*billæ falsæ et seditiones*)." Whoever had such, "shall immediately tear them into small fragments, or burn them;" and "any one failing in this is to be held answerable as the author, until he find the author." Proclamation is further to be made, "that any one informing against another who has written, or stuck up, or in any way communicated such a tract, shall, on conviction, receive a sure reward of twenty pounds (about £180 in our money), and half the property of the person convicted." Power was also given to arrest or imprison persons

Conyn, a wealthy merchant of Bristol, and the mayor of that year, showed his patriotism by offering to build, at his own cost, "a stately vessel, only for the warre;" and, owing to the fear of a French invasion, "the lords appointed to keep the sea were making hem redye yn all haste;" not a whit too soon, as events afterwards proved. All this time, the common every-day life of the people went on as usual; and very curious are the revelations found of it in this collection of *Letters*. For instance, one lays bare the anxiety of a good mother about her son, who was at school in London. Judging from the mother's letter, Clement Paston had a better wardrobe than wit. Although carefully describing the "five gowns," and their colours and respective ages, his mother shows that her chief trouble is about Clement's dulness,—a dulness that prompts her to think that he must be "trewly belassched" (whipped) unless he mends, telling the London friend to whom she writes, that that was how his former master at Cambridge treated him, "and the best he ever had," says the reflecting mother. But thinking of the disgrace of failure in the new school, she adds, with more energy than tenderness, "I had lever (rather) he were fairly buried than lost for default." During the same year, "thieves and malefactors had justice done upon them daily, for which the people were glad." Moreover, perhaps in prospect of war, "the soldiers were more temperate than they were."

in any way circulating such *billæ*. The Proclamation is addressed by the King to the Sheriff of London, and a similar brief was sent to *all* the sheriffs of England.

The inference, therefore, is plain: at that time numerous books, advocating the opinions of the Lollards, were in general circulation throughout all parts of the country; and, as many of the Lollards held and advocated Baptist opinions, the seed of future harvests was thus being widely scattered.

CHAPTER II.

ANCIENT BAPTIST CHURCHES IN ENGLAND.

Hill Cliffe, near Warrington.

WE have reliable evidence that a Separatist, and, probably, a Baptist Church, has existed for several centuries in a secluded part of Cheshire, on the borders of Lancashire, about a mile and a-half from Warrington. No spot could be better chosen for concealment than the site on which this ancient chapel stood. Removed from all public roads, enclosed by a dense wood, affording ready access into two counties, Hill Cliffe was admirably suited for the erection of a *conventicula illicita*, an illegal conventicle. The ancient chapel built on this spot was so constructed that the surprised worshippers had half-a-dozen secret ways of escaping from it, and long proved a meeting-place suited to the varying fortunes of a hated and hunted people.

Owing to the many changes inseparable from the eventful history of the church at Hill Cliffe, the earliest records have been lost. But two or three facts point to the very early existence of the community itself. In 1841 the then old chapel was enlarged and modernised; and, in digging for the foundation, a large baptistry of stone, well-cemented, was discovered. How long this had been covered up, and at what period it was erected, it is impossible to state; but as some of the tombstones in the graveyard adjoining the chapel were erected in the early

part of the Sixteenth Century, there is some probability for the tradition that the chapel itself was built by the Lollards who held Baptist opinions. One of the dates on the tombstones is 1357, the time when Wycliffe was still a Fellow at Merton College, Oxford; but the dates most numerous begin at the period when Europe had just been startled by Luther's valiant onslaught upon the Papacy, and Henry the Eighth had recently published his book against the German Reformer, which earned for him the title of "Defender of the Faith." Many of these tombstones, and especially the oldest, as we can testify from a personal examination, look as fresh and clear as if they were engraved only a century ago.

The names of some of the early ministers of Hill Cliffe chapel have been snatched from oblivion. One of them, Mr. Weyerburton, or Warburton, was related to the oldest family in the county of Chester, was a person of substance, and "a true warrior of Christ's Church." His connection with Hill Cliffe chapel, as its minister, was accidentally discovered some years ago in examining the title-deeds of the Warburton property. Mr. Weyerburton died six years after the destruction of the Spanish Armada. A record of this good man's life, if one could obtain it, would throw much light upon the condition of the Separatists and Anabaptists in England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

Although Mr. Weyerburton is the first minister of Hill Cliffe of whom anything is known, he is not necessarily to be regarded as the earliest minister of the congregation. Mr. Dainteth succeeded Mr. Weyerburton. The graveyard contains the tomb of his successor—Thomas Slater Leyland, "a minister of the Gospel," as the inscription tells us. He was buried in the year preceding the death of Queen Elizabeth. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Mr. Tillam was the minister of Hill Cliffe. Oliver Cromwell worshipped at the chapel when his army lay at Warrington, and one of his officers occupied the pulpit. Thomas Lowe succeeded Mr. Tillam, and attended the General Assembly

of Baptists held in London the year after the landing of William, Prince of Orange. This (1689) was also the date of the passing of the Act of Toleration, from which period, as every Dissenter knows, really begins the *legal* diffusion of Nonconformity throughout Great Britain. During the pastorate of the next minister, Mr. Francis Turner, a man of great ability, of restless zeal, and of extensive usefulness, the first Baptist church was formed in Liverpool, mainly through the labours of some of Mr. Turner's converts.

Hill Cliffe is undoubtedly one of the oldest Baptist churches in England, but its claim to be the oldest is still disputed by some. The earliest deeds of the property have been irrecoverably lost, but the extant deeds, which go back considerably over two hundred years, describe the property as being "for the use of the people commonly called Anabaptists." The modern chapel stands upon the gentle slope of a sandstone hill. The wood which embosomed the ancient sanctuary has long since been cut down, and the present modest meeting-house is conspicuous from afar,—from the streets of quaint old Warrington, and from the wide reach of level country by which that historic town is surrounded.

Eythorne, Kent.

The church at Eythorne, Kent, owes its origin to some Dutch Baptists, who settled in this country in the time of Henry the Eighth. They were, doubtless, tempted to make England their home by the brisk trade that sprang up between this country and Holland, soon after the marriage of Henry with Anne of Cleves (1540). According to a long prevalent tradition, ("uninterrupted and uncontradicted," says one authority,) Joan Boucher, or Joan of Kent, was a member of the Baptist church at Eythorne. Joan was a lady of some position, and had ready access to the court. Much of her time was spent in visiting her friends in prison, and in relieving, with a bountiful hand, their necessities. For the greater secrecy, she was accus-

tomed to tie religious books in strings under her dress, and so the more readily pass with them into Court. Strype says that she did very much to promote the circulation of Tyndale's New Testament, then recently published. A great reader of the Scriptures herself, she sought to persuade others to follow her example. The Protestant Inquisitors, hearing that she held some unusual views on the physical body of Christ, summoned her to appear "in the chapel of the blessed Mary in St. Paul's." Long and tedious examinations followed. Joan was cast into prison. Cranmer, Latimer, and others, here sought to reason her out of her opinions. She remained unmoved, and was therefore "left to the secular arm to suffer her deserved punishment," for daring, that is, to think differently from prelates so grave, and a church so recently reformed. Nearly twelve months elapsed before her sentence was executed. Modern writers have sought to throw the blame of her martyrdom on the Council, and thus shield Cranmer from its odium. Others regard as purely mythical the story of Edward's tears when asked to sign Joan's death warrant, and Hallam thinks that the tale ought to vanish from history. However this may be, on the 2nd of May, 1550, Joan of Kent was led out to Smithfield. Even at the stake, she was still worried by the slanders and misrepresentations of her enemies, and to Bishop Scorey, who repeated them, Joan answered, with the plain speech that distinguished the age, "You lie like a rogue. Go, read the Scriptures." The Bishop might need the advice, for aught that appears to the contrary.

In the Calendar of State Papers (Domestic Series, 1547—1580), under the date of October 28th, 1552, we have this entry: "Northumberland, to Sir William Cecill. Wishes the King would appoint Mr. Knox to the Bishopric of Rochester. He would be a whetstone to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and a confounder of the Anabaptists lately sprung up in Kent." It would be historically inaccurate to regard this as the first intimation of the existence of Baptists, as a separate community in

England. Apart from the probabilities about the still earlier origin of Hill Cliffe Church, it should not be forgotten that Henry the Eighth had long before 1550 proclaimed to the nation how, "like a good Catholic priest, he abhorred and detested their (the Anabaptists') wicked and abominable errors and opinions;" that in his second proclamation, he had warned all Anabaptists and Zwinglians to depart out of the country, under pain of death; and that in a third proclamation, when Cranmer was a Protestant archbishop, Cranmer and eight others were authorized to make diligent search for Anabaptist men, Anabaptist letters, and Anabaptist books, full power being put into Cranmer's hands to deal capitally with each offender. The Baptists, in King Edward's days, might have lately sprung up in Kent, but these proclamations show that they were not then known for the first time in England.

One singular fact, perhaps without a parallel, in the history of this ancient General Baptist church at Eythorne, deserves to be mentioned: the names of the pastors, from the close of the Sixteenth Century to the last quarter of the Seventeenth Century, were John Knott. The first John Knott became the pastor of Eythorne somewhere between 1590 and 1600, and the last John Knott removed to Chatham in 1680. One of these Mr. Knotts, it is uncertain which, was a blacksmith, and attracted the notice of the informers by his zeal as a preacher. Whilst working in his shop, some friend brought him word that an officer and a party of men were coming over Eythorne Down to pounce upon him. Knott hurriedly escaped by a back door, and hid himself in an old saw-pit, covered by nettles and other weeds. Presently the informers came into Mr. Knott's house, where they found his wife, with a child in her arms. On asking for Mr. Knott, the little child, suspecting no danger, cried out, "Daddy's gone out!" and would, perhaps, have further betrayed its father's whereabouts, but for a vigorous shaking from the mother, who at length succeeded in making it hold its tongue. While "the man-takers" searched about the

house and neighbourhood for her husband, Mrs. Knott, with great presence of mind, bustled about the house, and put out the humble dinner for her family. The search proving fruitless, and the men finding the family dinner smoking on the table when they returned, asked Mrs. Knott to give them some refreshment. This she did instantly, and with the greatest cheerfulness. Mrs. Knott's kindness told favourably upon the informers. They were so well satisfied with her treatment of them, that they left the house, declaring they would make no further search after her husband, nor do anything to distress so good-natured a woman. For that time, at least, Mr. Knott escaped out of their hands. It is also said, probably concerning the same man, that on another occasion his goods were confiscated and put up to auction. So much was he respected by his neighbours, that not one of them would even offer a bid for his goods at the sale; and the strangers who were present, taking their cue from his neighbours, also declined to purchase them. Mr. Knott's goods, therefore, remained unsold.

It is worthy of record that the Church of Christ in this little village has existed for more than three hundred years without a single unfriendly division, and with a steadfast adherence to the faith and practice of the Primitive Church.

Bocking and Braintree, Essex.

In Strype's *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, we find these words, under date 1550: "Sectaries appeared now in Essex and Kent, sheltering themselves under the profession of the Gospel, of whom complaint was made to the Council. These were the first that made separation from the Church of England, having gathered congregations of their own." They were the first, that is, of which Strype had heard. "The congregation in Essex was mentioned to be at Bocking; that at Kent was at Faversham, as I learnt from an old register. From whence I also collect that they held the opinions of the Anabaptists and the Pelagians; that there were contributions among them for

the better maintaining of their congregations; that the members of the congregation in Kent went over with the congregation into Essex, to instruct and join with them; and that they had their meetings in Kent, and in divers places besides Faversham." In other words, the Kent churches at Eythorne, Faversham, Sandwich, Canterbury, perhaps, and other places, helped to build up, if they did not actually originate, the church at Bocking.

Bocking and Braintree are two parishes divided by the main road, and the whole is now known as Braintree. The "complaints," by whomsoever made, against the Baptists at Bocking, led to their being watched, and about sixty persons were in the house when the sheriff interrupted their assembly. They confessed to the Council that they had met "to talk the Scriptures," and that they had not communed at the parish church for two years.* Some were fined and set at liberty. Others were imprisoned, and remained until Queen Mary came to the throne, when they were released, only again to be taken into custody, and by-and-by to the stake.

Among the most eminent of the ministers thus dragged, for conscience' sake, before the Protestant Inquisition, with Cranmer at its head, was Mr. Humphrey Middleton. By order of Cranmer he was kept in prison until the last year of the reign of Edward the Sixth. Middleton is reported to have said to Cranmer, after Cranmer had pronounced his condemnation: "Well, reverend sir, pass what sentence you think fit upon us. But that you may not say you were not forewarned, I testify that your turn will be next." He was one of those who earned a martyr's crown in the reign of Mary.

Mr. Henry Hart was another of the teachers connected with

* We are told in Strype's *Memorials of Cranmer*, that, on the particular Sunday when these sixty men were surprised, "There arose among them a great dispute 'Whether it were necessary to stand or kneel, bareheaded or covered, at prayers?' and they concluded the ceremony not to be material, but that the heart before God was required, and nothing else."

the churches in Kent and Essex. But little is known of Hart, of George Brobridge, and of others, beyond their names. Hart was imprisoned, this much is known of him, in the dismal days of Queen Mary, and zealously combated in jail the predestinarian views of some other victims of Mary's gloomy and cruel fanaticism. Bradford was one of his opponents.

The Bocking-Braintree church-book, still in existence, carries back the authentic records of the church for more than two hundred years; but there is no question that the origin of the church itself dates back to the days of Edward the Sixth.

Tiverton, Devon, Shrewsbury, Stoney Stanton, and other churches, claim to be more than two centuries old, and the first is said to have existed since the last years of the reign of Queen Elizabeth. But the three churches we have mentioned—Hill Cliffe, Eythorne, and Bocking deservedly rank as the most ancient Baptist churches in England.

CHAPTER III.

ORIGIN OF THE BAPTIST DENOMINATION.

Smyth and the General Baptists.

ALTHOUGH, as we have seen, there were a few General Baptist churches in existence as early as the days of Henry the Eighth, the modern General Baptists rightly regard John Smyth as the father and founder of their denomination. They trace their history rather to his efforts, and to the labours of those who were his immediate successors, than to the churches at Eythorne or Bocking. A brief story of his life will, therefore, not be out of place in these sketches.

Among the hundreds in England who felt the weight of the oppressive ecclesiastical laws of the Stuarts was John Smyth, the Vicar of Gainsborough. Puritan rather than Anglican, Smyth was yet ready to enter the lists against the Brownists, who were numerous in that part of the country. His defence of the use of the Lord's Prayer earned for him the praise of Bishop Hall. By degrees, however, Smyth became dissatisfied with the discipline and ceremonies of the Established Church, and held a dispute on the subject with Mr. Hildersham and other divines. Further enquiries followed. His former doubts were confirmed; and, like an honest man, Smyth gave up his benefice, and all the social and ecclesiastical advantages of his position. Such was the general opinion of his integrity and his gifts, that he was at once invited to become the pastor of one

of the Brownist churches in Lincolnshire. Robinson, the father of the English Independents, and Clifton, were co-pastors of another Brownist church in the same region. Owing to repeated harass from the High Court of Commission, Smyth, Robinson, Clifton, and their respective flocks, decided to seek in Holland the liberty they could not obtain at home. Accordingly, in 1606, the voluntary exiles started for Amsterdam, Smyth acting as the leader. He was Robinson's "guide," "general," and "oracle," according to Bishop Hall; and Ephraim Pagitt, in his scurrilous book, *Heresiography*, describes Smyth as "one of the grandees of the separation."

Once in Amsterdam, Smyth and his fellow exiles joined the English Church, of which Johnson was the pastor, and Ainsworth the teacher. Free to pursue his religious enquiries unmolested, Smyth now devoted himself to a diligent study of the sacred Scriptures. New light broke in upon his mind, of which he was not slow to speak. The New Testament churches, with their simple order and discipline, seemed strangely unlike the half Jewish society at Amsterdam, with which he was united. He felt, moreover, that he could no longer hold the doctrines of personal election and reprobation. His faith was also shaken in some other points "assuredly believed among" the Amsterdam Separatists. He had ceased to be a Calvinist, and had become an Arminian. Much talk arose about these changes in his opinions. Meanwhile, Smyth adopted new views on the subject of baptism.

The last question came up in reviewing his dissent from the Establishment. He and his Brownist friends had rejected the ordination of the State Church, but they still retained her baptism. Smyth now made the subject his special study, and was speedily led to adopt believers' baptism as alone consistent with New Testament teaching. With his usual frankness he openly and zealously advocated his new opinions.

This was more than the charity of his associates could bear. Arminianism was bad enough; but believers' baptism was

worse; at least so thought Robinson, Clifton, and others. Smyth, and those who sympathised in his opinions, were cut off from the church. A bitter controversy broke out; and his former friends presently showed that though they had themselves fled from persecution, they had not yet learnt the true nature of Christian liberty. Freedom meant, thinking as they thought; and when once Smyth boldly announced his difference of opinion, they placed him beyond the pale of charity. He was charged with "murdering the souls of babes and sucklings, by depriving them of the visible seals of salvation." Every kind of reproach and abuse were heaped upon the man whom all had once held in loving esteem. He was declared to be "of wolfish nature," "a brute beast," and one "whom God had stricken with blindness."

Smyth was not the man to be shaken from any position he had deliberately taken by any such harsh and unchristian treatment. By lip and by pen he steadily continued to teach the opinions he had accepted, after a careful and reverent study of the Scriptures. Men flocked about him, as men always will flock about any teacher who speaks with the emphasis of personal conviction. A religious society was gathered, of which John Smyth and Thomas Helwys were the pastors. This happened about two years after the Brownist exiles reached Amsterdam. How large this church afterwards became is matter of doubt; but an enemy of that little band, distinguished by his rancorous spirit, declares that "Smyth and his disciples did at once, as it were, swallow up all the separation besides."

There is some obscurity as to the kind of baptism first adopted by Smyth. He and Helwys baptized each other, and afterwards baptized the rest of their company. But until recent times it was held that this baptism was by immersion. Dr. Müller thinks, however, that facts contradict the long-prevalent tradition. He assures us that the branch of the Mennonite church with which Smyth and his friends were afterwards associated, never administered baptism in any other way than by affusion

or by sprinkling. Moreover, a letter from Lubbert Gerritt, one of the Mennonites, who interested himself in Smyth and his party, distinctly states as a reason for their acceptance by the Dutch association of churches, that, "inquiring for the foundation and forms of their baptism, we have found that there was no difference at all, neither in the one thing nor the other, between them and us." It is equally plain, however, from Smyth's letter to Clifton, and from Smyth's pamphlet occasioned by the correspondence, that he rejected the baptism of infants as unscriptural. "True baptism," says Smyth, "is of new creatures, of new-born babes in Christ. False baptism is of infants born after the flesh." But, whatever doubt may hang over the mode of baptism at first adopted by Smyth and his friends, there is little doubt that they afterwards adopted baptism by immersion.

Smyth has been charged with being "of an unsettled head," because he desires in the preface to one of his books, that his last writings may always be taken for his present judgment. But the deplorable ignorance of the times, the gradual development of truth in his own mind, and the fact that he wrote against captious opponents, are a sufficient justification of this request. Nothing can be more trenchant than Smyth's reply to the charge of fickleness made by the writers of his own day. "It may be thought most strange," says Smyth, "that a man should ofttimes change his religion; and it cannot be accounted a commendable quality in any man to make many alterations and changes in such weighty matters as are cases of conscience. This must needs be true, and we confess it, if one condition be admitted, that the religion which a man changeth be the truth. For, otherwise, to change a false religion is commendable, and to retain a false religion is damnable. For a man, if he be a Turk, to become a Jew; if a Jew, to become a Papist; if a Papist, to become a Protestant, are all commendable changes, though they all befall one and the same person in one year; nay, if it were possible, in

one month. So that, to change religion is not evil simply; and, therefore, that we should fall from the profession of Puritanism to Brownism, and from Brownism to true Christian baptism, is not simply evil or reprovable in itself, *except it can be proved that we have fallen from true religion.* If we, therefore, being formerly deceived in the way of Pædo-baptistry, do now embrace the faith in the true Christian and Apostolic baptism, then let no man impute this as a fault in us."

It is no part of our plan to offer any general defence of Smyth's opinions, and the opinions themselves will be best learnt from his *Confession*, probably, as Dr. Evans thinks, "the *first* Baptist creed of modern times." We may be pardoned, however, for calling attention here to the true apprehension by Smyth of the duties of the civil magistrate in religious matters. "The magistrate, by virtue of his office, is not to meddle with religion, or matters of conscience, nor to compel men to this or to that form of religion or doctrine; but to leave the Christian religion to the free conscience of every one, and to meddle only with political matters. . . . Christ alone is the King and Lawgiver of the Church and the conscience."

Smyth and his disciples were called by their former friends heretics and free-willers; but not a syllable is breathed by his bitterest opponent against his reputation. His unblemished character during the time of holding the Gainsborough benefice, earned for him the general esteem of all parties. His personal excellence whilst with the Brownists in England, and afterwards with the Separatists in Holland, none were disposed to question. Nor did the keenest eyes of the men, who had every opportunity of observing his conduct after he became a Baptist, detect anything with which to upbraid him, except the fearlessness of his spirit, and the boldness with which he advocated what he deemed to be scriptural truth. Cotton Mather's reflections on Smyth's dying steadfastness in his opinions must therefore be taken for what they are worth. "Sad and woeful"

might be to Mather, "the memory of Mr. Smyth's strong consolations on his death bed," which were "set as a seal to Smyth's gross and damnable Arminianism and enthusiasm;" but the regret of modern readers will be, that so little is known respecting the life and death of this fearless and faithful student of the Scriptures. Smyth died in Holland in 1612.

Thomas Helwys retained the sole pastorate of the Baptist church after John Smyth's decease. But in 1614, he and his friends began to think that they had been actuated by cowardice rather than prudence in escaping to Holland out of the reach of persecution; and believing, moreover, as they afterwards wrote, "that fleeing on account of persecution had been the overthrow of religion in this island," they heroically returned to England. A church was formed in London. Smyth's *Confession*, and other pamphlets advocating their opinions were published. Many converts were thus won to their faith—"a multitude of disciples," says one of their opponents—notwithstanding the persecutions they had to endure.

The labours of Helwys, Morton, and other disciples of John Smyth, ultimately led to the formation of the denomination of General Baptists. *Truth's Champion*, an able defence of their principles, by Morton, next to Smyth's *Confession*, and Helwys's pamphlet, helped most widely to diffuse their opinions. A copy of Morton's book was found in Colchester, at the beginning of the Civil War. It dropped out when an old wall was being demolished.

Spilsbury and the Particular Baptists.

In 1616 an Independent church was gathered in London. Mr. Henry Jacob was its first pastor, and Mr. John Lathrop the second. During the pastorate of Mr. Lathrop, some of the members began to think that the church was not adhering very strictly to the first principles which led to their separation from the Established Church, and had, moreover, come to regard adult baptism as the only baptism warranted by Scripture.

They therefore asked to be allowed to withdraw, in order to form themselves into a society more in harmony with their own views. Two things weighed with their old friends in acceding to their wishes: the receders were acting according to the dictates of their consciences, and the original church had now grown too large to meet together, in those perilous days for Dissenters, without molestation. The separation took place in Sept., 1633, and the new church met at Wapping, at that time a pleasant suburb of London. The little society, which did not then consist of many more than a score members, called Mr. John Spilsbury to the pastorate.

Five years after the above date (1638), a further secession from the original church strengthened their hands. Among the seceders were William Kiffin and Thomas Wilson. Kiffin, to whose pen we are indebted for the account of the origin of this first Calvinistic Baptist church in England, thus speaks of the reasons which led to his joining Mr. Spilsbury:—"I used all endeavours, by converse with such as were able, and also by diligently searching the Scriptures, with earnest desires to God that I might be directed in a right way of worship; and, after some time, concluded that the safest way was to follow the footsteps of the flock, namely, that order laid down by Christ and His apostles, and practised by the primitive Christians in their time, which I found to be, after conversion they were baptized, added to the church, and continued in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and breaking of bread, and prayers."

Very little has been preserved respecting Mr. Spilsbury, except that he was a man of reputation among his brethren. His name appears in the *Confession of Faith*, published by seven churches in London, in 1644. About eight years afterwards some persecuted Baptists in Massachusett's Colony, addressed a letter "unto our well-beloved John Spilsbury, William Kiffin, and to the rest that in London stand fast in the faith, and continued to walk steadfastly in that order of the Gospel which was

once delivered to the saints by Jesus Christ." The following year (1653), Mr. Secretary Thurloe received a letter from Henry Cromwell, referring to the agitation among the Anabaptists in Ireland, who had become Fifth Monarchy men, and objected to the title of Lord Protector being given to Oliver Cromwell, thinking it applicable to God alone. "All are quiet here," says Henry Cromwell, "except a few inconsiderable persons of the Anabaptists' judgment, who also are very well contented; but I believe they will receive much satisfaction from a letter very lately come to their hands from Mr. Kiffin and Mr. Spilsbury, in which they have dealt very homely and plainly with those of that judgment here." These two facts reveal the estimate in which Mr. Spilsbury was held in America and in Ireland. His name appears in the *Declaration against Venner's Rebellion* in 1662; but in no public document after that date. It is therefore probable that Mr. Spilsbury was removed by death soon after the restoration of Charles the Second.

A quotation from Luke Howard's *Looking-glass for Baptists*, although containing the opinion of one who had renounced his Baptist sentiments, and had become a Quaker (a very common thing in the days of the Civil War and the Commonwealth), is not without interest. "In the years 1643-1644 the people called Baptists began to have an entrance into Kent; and Ann Stevens, of Canterbury, who was afterwards my wife, being the first that received them there, was dipped into the belief and church of William Kiffin, who then was of the opinion commonly called the Particular Election and reprobation of persons; and by him was also dipped Nicholas Woodman, of Canterbury, myself, and Mark Elfrith, of Dover, with many more, both men and women, who were all of the opinion on that particular point, and who reckoned themselves of the seven churches in that day, who gave forth a book, called *The Faith of the Seven Churches*, which was then opposite to the Baptists that held the General, as is still the same. At which time there was great contest

between those Baptists, the General, as Lamb, Barber, and those who held the universal love of God to all, and Kiffin, Patience, Spillman (Spilsbury), and Collyer, and those that held the Particular Election; so that if any of the Particular men or women of the seven churches aforesaid did change their opinions from the Particular to the General, that then they were to be baptized again; because, they said, you were baptized into a wrong faith, and so into another Gospel, using that saying, 'If any man bring any other Gospel than that which we have received, let him be accursed.' Whereupon several denied their belief and baptism, and were baptized again into the General opinion, or belief. But Nicholas Woodman aforesaid, with Mark Elfrith, with all of them in Kent, except Daniel Cox, of Canterbury, which never baptized any, held their baptism in the Particular, but changed their opinions to the General, and some to free-will, and the mortality of the soul, and many other things."

The Six-Principle Baptists.

The churches which held to the "six principles" were never very numerous; but any review of English Baptists would be incomplete which omitted all reference to them.

The General Assembly, which met in London in 1689, adopted, as their distinguishing principles, personal election and final perseverance. But some Baptist Churches in London refused to subscribe to these opinions, and others as persistently declined to sign any terms of human composition. These churches were, however, agreed in accepting the six principles enumerated in Hebrews vi. 1, 2: repentance, faith, baptism, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal life. The churches holding these opinions decided upon having a small assembly of their own; accordingly, in March 1690, the elders, ministers, and representatives of five churches, all situated in London, met at White Street meeting, Moorfields. They agreed that, "for the preservation of a cordial union

among themselves, all the five parts should, once every year, meet together at one place to celebrate our Lord's death in the Supper; only, whereas, many of our brethren which belong to Goodman's Field's meeting, differing from the other parts in the matter of the Lord's Supper, they were to have liberty to absent themselves from that general meeting, if they pleased."

The five churches comprising this small Assembly were White Street, or White's Alley, Moorfields; Rupert Street, Goodman's Fields; Glasshouse Yard, Goswell Street; Fair Street, formerly Dock Head, or Shad Thames; and Duke Street, Southwark. To these five churches were afterwards joined the churches meeting in Dunning's Alley, Bishopgate Without; St. John's Court, Hart Street, Covent Garden; and High Hall, West Smithfield. This last church was gathered by Dr. William Russell, an equally valiant opponent of "conjoint singing" and "Sabbatarian Baptists." Mr. John Griffith, the first pastor of the Dunning's Alley Church, combated some of the opinions held by the Calvinistic Baptists, and in one chapter of a treatise on "Final Perseverance," deals rather harshly with "fourteen absurdities naturally flowing from the doctrine of the impossibility for believers to fall finally from grace."

It has been common to describe these six-principle Churches as General Baptists; but at the time of their union, they were actually composed of persons holding Arminian and Calvinistic sentiments. After some years the Calvinistic ministers and members withdrew from them, and the few churches that remained were thenceforward known only as General Baptist Churches. Some "six-principle" churches still exist in Rhode Island.

The Seventh-Day Baptists.

This was a smaller society than the six-principle Baptists; but like them, it has preserved a few churches to represent its opinions, even in our own day. They derived their designation from the fact that they kept the Seventh day

as the Sabbath. They objected to the reasons generally urged for keeping the first day of the week, and contended that the change from the seventh day to the first was originated by Constantine. "God," said they, "hath required the observance of the seventh or last day of every week to be observed by mankind universally for the weekly Sabbath. This command is perpetually binding upon man till time shall be no more. This sacred rest of the Seventh-day Sabbath is not (by Divine authority) changed from the seventh and last, to the first day of the week; nor do the Scriptures anywhere require the observance of any other day of the week for the weekly Sabbath, but the seventh day only."

The founder of this section of the Baptist body was Rev. Francis Bampfield, M.A., an excellent and pious minister. He was a graduate of the University of Oxford, and began his public life as a minister of the Establishment in Dorset. Here his devotion to the duties of his sacred office, his zeal for the promotion of true piety, his care for the poor and the infirm, won for him golden opinions among his parishioners. At the outbreak of the civil war, Bampfield was a zealous Royalist. He hesitated about paying the taxes imposed by the Parliamentarians, and he publicly read the Book of Common Prayer longer than any other clergyman in Dorset. For his zeal in the cause of the Established Church, he had already been given a prebend's stall in Exeter Cathedral. At length his opinions underwent an entire change, and he confessed that the Church of the State needed a second reformation. To the best of his ability he now sought to make the teaching of Christ his only rule. In 1653, he subscribed to the Commonwealth. Two years after this date he removed to Sherborne, where he remained the faithful pastor of a necessitous people, until the passing of the Act of Uniformity in 1662.

Now began Mr. Bampfield's troubles. After resigning his living, he still continued to preach in his own house. He was apprehended while thus conducting a service, and hurried

off to Dorchester jail. Nothing daunted, he preached the following Sunday in the prison yard, numbers of the townspeople crowding in the open space outside the prison and within earshot of his voice. Released for a time, Bampfield was again lodged in Dorchester jail, and remained there eight wearisome years. But they were not years of idleness. He preached in prison nearly every day, and gathered a church within its very walls. Set at liberty in 1675, he still went on with his preaching, was again seized, and this time, as he was apprehended in Wiltshire, was lodged in Salisbury jail. On account of the heavy fine imposed upon him, this imprisonment lasted a year and a half. On his release, he came to London, and soon after avowed himself a Sabbatarian Baptist. A Church was formed in March, 1676, of persons holding similar views, and "that eminently pious minister of Christ," as the original Church-book declares, "Mr. Francis Bampfield," became their pastor, as he had already been their teacher. "We laid our Church state," the record continues, "upon the only sure foundation, and agree to form and regulate it by the only certain rule and measure, expressing the nature of the constitution of their Church in the following terms:— 'We own the Lord Jesus Christ to be the one and only Lord and Lawgiver to our souls and consciences. And we own the Holy Scriptures of truth as the one and only rule of faith, worship, and life; according to which we are to judge of all cases.'"

The original meeting-place of this Church was Pinner's Hall, Broad Street, London; but as this place was well-known, neither Mr. Bampfield nor his friends were allowed to remain long without molestation. On 17th February, 1682, the church assembled in the forenoon at their usual hour for worship, and Mr. Bampfield had already commenced his sermon, when in rushed a constable, staff in hand, several men with halberts following at his heels. The constable commanded Bampfield, in the King's name, to cease and come down. Bampfield

replied that he was discharging his office in the name of the King of kings. "I have," said the constable, "a warrant from the Lord Mayor to disturb your meeting." "I have a warrant from Jesus Christ," rejoined Mr. Bampfield, "who is Lord Maximus, to go on." Mr. Bampfield now began to resume his discourse, when the constable ordered one of his halberdiers to pull him down. The preacher and six of his people were taken before the Lord Mayor, were fined ten pounds each, and were set at liberty. Nothing daunted, they met again in the afternoon; and would have proceeded with the service, but for the interruption of a constable and his minions. The service was resumed in Mr. Bampfield's own house, whither a large company followed him. A third interruption occurred on the following Saturday, when the congregation had already been assembled for some time. Mr. Bampfield was praying when the constable entered, and did not cease until one of the officers pulled him out of the pulpit. As he was led through the crowded streets to the Lord Mayor, Bampfield carried his Bible in his hand. Some of the spectators sneered at him as "a Christian Jew," but others exclaimed, "See how he walks with his Bible in his hand, like one of the old martyrs!"

He was remanded to the Sessions, and he and three others were committed to Newgate. On the 28th March the Recorder read out the sentence: "that they were out of the protection of the King's Majesty, that all their goods and chattels were forfeited; and that they were to remain in gaol during their lives, or during the King's pleasure." Mr. Bampfield would have spoken in reply, but a great uproar arose as soon as he began to speak. "Away with them!" cried some angry voices. Others shouted, "Put them away from the bar. We will not hear them." They were thus being rudely clamoured down, without any attempt to check it on the part of the court, when Mr. Bampfield, seizing a moment's silence that occurred in this uproar, exclaimed, "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness.

The Lord be judge in this case!" Thus appealing from the unjust earthly judge, to the Judge of all the earth, Bampfield was hurried back to Newgate. A man naturally of delicate frame, the hardships of his various imprisonments began to tell on his health. He had lived the full period allotted by the Psalmist to man, but the enfeebled state of his body, in consequence of his long and rigorous imprisonments, and the harsh treatment which obliged him to remain, at his last trial, for ten long hours in a cold and loathsome bail dock, hastened his end. He died on 16th Feb., 1683-4, much lamented by his fellow prisoners, as well as by his many friends and acquaintances. His body was interred, amidst a large concourse of spectators, in the burial ground behind the Glasshouse-yard chapel, Goswell-street, London.

There are two congregations of Seventh-day Baptists in England, one meeting in Mill-yard, Whitechapel, and the other somewhere in the country; but in America the Seventh-day Baptists are numerous.

The Scotch Baptists.

The section of the Baptist denomination known as the Scotch Baptists, "took its rise in 1765," and mainly owes its existence and increase to the zeal and ability of one devoted man—Mr. Archibald McLean. He had been an earnest and conscientious member of the Presbyterian Church in Glasgow, of which Rev. John Maclaurin was the minister; but having read Rev. John Glas's *Testimony to the King of Martyrs*, his faith was shaken in the propriety of national establishments of religion. This change led to his withdrawment from the Presbyterian Church in 1762, and to his uniting with a small society of Glasites, or, as they are better known in Scotland, the Sandemanians. A difference between himself and this church in a case of discipline ended in a speedy separation from them; and in 1765 he became a Baptist. The last change in his opinions originated in this way:—Mr. Robert Carmichael, his friend (an

Independent minister who had just removed from Glasgow to Edinburgh), and himself had talked together on the subject of infant baptism. Both felt at a loss to find Scriptural warrant for it, but not wishing to relinquish their belief hastily, it was agreed that each of them should carefully consult the New Testament on the subject, and communicate their thoughts upon it to each other. Mr. McLean was the first to arrive at the conclusion that the baptism of infants had no foundation in the Word of God. He hastened to state his reasons for this to Mr. Carmichael, and after some few months, Mr. Carmichael adopted Baptist opinions. In May 1765, Mr. Carmichael and some of his friends who sympathised with his wiews, withdrew from the Independent Church, and in October of the same year Mr. Carmichael came to London, and was baptized in Barbican by Dr. Gill. Before the close of the year the seceders and Mr. McLean were baptized by Mr. Carmichael. In 1766 Mr. McLean published some letters in Mr. Glas's *Dissertation on Infant Baptism*, which awakened great attention in Scotland. The following year he removed to Edinburgh, where he became the overseer of the extensive printing establishment of Messrs. Donaldson and Company, and in June he was unanimously elected by the small Baptist Church in that city, as Mr. Carmichael's colleague.

The church in Edinburgh now rapidly increased. Churches were also formed in Glasgow, Montrose, Dundee, and other towns in Scotland. Mr. Carmichael removed to Dundee, and Mr. William Braidwood, a convert from the Independents, became joint elder with Mr. McLean of the Church in Edinburgh. Mr. McLean continued to superintend the extensive concern of Donaldson's printing office for eighteen years, and during the same period was a zealous and faithful elder of the original Scotch Baptist Church. The further spread of the distinctive principles of the Scotch Baptists, not only in Scotland but in England; the pressure of work which was thus thrown on Mr. McLean; not only in answering numerous letters of enquiry,

in settling points of difference that arose in some of the new churches, but also "in setting societies in order, and in ordaining elders over them;" the difficulty of attending conscientiously to his duties as overseer of a large printing office and of meeting these various religious claims upon his leisure time; together with the fact that his health was beginning visibly to suffer, led the Church at Edinburgh to urge upon him the relinquishment of his secular work, and the acceptance of such a salary from them as they were able to offer. He agreed to their request in 1785, and now devoted himself with renewed energy to the duties of his sacred office. Year after year, in addition to the oversight of all the Churches of the Scotch Baptist persuasion, pamphlet after pamphlet appeared from his unwearied and prolific pen. Some of his publications were greatly admired for their simplicity, their earnestness, and their eminently Scriptural character by many devout men of other Christian denominations. Mr. McLean took a lively interest in furthering the regard of his own people to the Baptist Missionary Society, and both by lip and by pen helped greatly to extend in Scotland a desire to co-operate in this great work.

About the middle of Nov. 1812, he was seized with dimness in one of his eyes, and sought relief in the application of electricity, with but little result. He still continued his labours in the Church, and preached as usual on Lord's-day, Dec. 6th. On the 21st of the same month he fell asleep, in the eightieth year of his age.

The opinions of the Scotch Baptists will be best given in Mc Lean's own words:

"As to their principles," says Mr. McLean, "they refer to no human system as the unexceptionable standard of their faith. They think our Lord and His Apostles used great plainness of speech in telling us what we should believe and practise; and thence they are led to understand a great many things more literally and strictly than those who seek to make the religion of Jesus correspond with the fashion of the time, or the decent

course of the world. . . . Though they hold the doctrine of particular election, of God's unchanging and everlasting love, and of the perseverance of the saints: yet they think it dangerous to comfort people by these considerations when they are in a backsliding state. In this case they think the Scripture motives to fear are most useful, and ought to have their full force, even the fear of falling away, and coming short of heavenly rest. They think it also unsafe, in such a case, to draw comfort from the reflection of our having *once believed*, it being their opinion, that we must be reduced to the mere mercy of God through the atonement which gave us relief at the first.

"Their Church order is strictly congregational, and so far as they can discern, upon the Apostolic plan, which is the only rule they profess to follow. A plurality of elders or pastors in every church, is a distinguishing feature in their order; at the same time when, from a deficiency of gifts, this cannot at first be attained, they first proceed with the setting a church in order by the ordination of one, although they consider a church incomplete without a plurality. The nature of their union requires that they should be strict and impartial in discipline, both to preserve purity, and keep clear the channels of brotherly love, that it may circulate freely through the body.

"They continue steadfast every first day of the week, in the Apostle's doctrine, that is, (1) in hearing the Scriptures read and preached; (2) in fellowship or contribution; (3) in breaking of bread or the Lord's Supper; (4) and in prayers, and singing of Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. The prayers and exhortations of the brethren are also admitted in their public meetings. (5) They observe the love-feast, and upon certain occasions (6) the kiss of charity; and also (7) the washing of one another's feet, when it is really serviceable as an act of hospitality. They (8) abstain from eating blood and things strangled; that is, flesh with the blood thereof, because these were not only forbidden to Noah and his posterity when

the grant of animal food was first made unto man, but also under the Gospel they are most solemnly prohibited to the believing Gentiles, along with fornication and things offered to idols.

"They think that a gaudy external appearance in either sex, be their station what it may, is a sure indication of the pride and vanity of heart. That women professing godliness are not to adorn themselves with plaited or broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but with modest outward apparel, as well as with the inward ornaments of the mind; also, that it is a shame for a man to have long hair, however sanctioned by the fashion.

"As to marriage, though they do not think either of the parties being an unbeliever, dissolves that relation, when once entered into; yet they hold it to be the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord.

"They also consider gaming, attending plays, routs, balls, and some other fashionable diversions, as unbecoming the gravity and sobriety of the Christian profession.

"As to their political sentiments they consider themselves bound to be subject to the powers that be in all lawful matters, to honour them, pray for them, and pay them tribute, and rather to suffer patiently for a good conscience than in any case to resist them by force. At the same time they are friendly to the rational and just liberties of mankind, and think themselves warranted to plead, in a respectful manner, for any just and legal rights and privileges which they are entitled to, whether of a civil or religious nature."

The New Connexion of General Baptists.

Towards the middle of the Eighteenth century the General Baptists of England had become largely tainted with anti-Trinitarian opinions. The natural result was, the decay and extinction of many churches. Thomas Grantham announced, in the Declaration presented to Charles the Second, that there

were over twenty thousand persons in England who then held General Baptist opinions. In the days of George the Second that number had greatly diminished; and since that period there has been a gradual decrease of churches who claim any historic connection with churches founded in the time of the Tudors and the Stuarts.

The New Connexion of General Baptists sprang into existence in 1770, and as a protest against the anti-Trinitarian opinions of the older body. Its origin is partly due to the labours of certain earnest and godly men in Leicestershire, and partly to the herculean labours of a convert from Wesleyanism in Yorkshire, Dan Taylor, of Wadsworth, near Hebden-bridge. The centre of the Leicestershire Society was Barton-in-the-Beans, a small hamlet two miles from Market Bosworth, the scene of the defeat and death of Richard the Third, the last of the Plantagenets. The Barton Society had been in existence some years before Dan Taylor made its acquaintance, and had churches affiliated with it at Melbourne, in Derbyshire, at Keyworth and Loughborough, Leicestershire, and at Kirkby-Woodhouse, Nottinghamshire. Abraham Booth was at this time pastor of the latter church.

In the year 1764, a young man, about five-and-twenty, rather under the average size of men, strongly built, and with a frame that exhausting labour in a coal mine had rather more firmly knit than wasted, took an active part in digging out from a quarry blocks of stone which were intended to be used in the erection of a new place of worship. He had already drawn out the plan itself of the building. He now vigorously helped to reproduce the plan on the steep side of a romantic valley. All worked with a will, inspired by the example of the man who was at once preacher, architect of his own chapel, and mason. The edifice was at length complete; when to crown his other labours and hasten on the work, he carried, on his own stalwart shoulders, from the old meeting place to the new one, the pulpit in which he was henceforth to labour. This was Dan Taylor,

justly regarded as the father and founder of the New Connexion of General Baptists.

The place of worship which Taylor had thus energetically assisted to build, was incumbered with a debt, which pressed heavily on the handful of people at Birchcliffe, as his new chapel was called. He therefore set off in quest of funds. The man who the year before had walked a hundred and twenty miles in the depth of winter in search of Baptists, and had contentedly slept one night under a hay-rick, was just the man to carry his point, whatever it might be. He travelled into the Midland Counties as far as Loughborough, and here first made the personal acquaintance of the people with whom for many years afterwards his own life and labours were closely entwined.

The following year Dan Taylor attended the General Assembly of the old General Baptist churches in London, as the representative of the Lincolnshire branch of their churches. During the next four years the divergence in doctrine between himself and this older body became more and more distasteful, and he and the Lincolnshire churches withdrew from them, and made overtures to the five Midland churches to join together in forming a new religious organization. The overtures were cordially received, and a preliminary meeting was held at Lincoln in 1769. Early in the following year, the first annual meeting met in London, under the title of "The Assembly of Free Grace General Baptists." Of the nineteen ministers who were present at that meeting, eight belonged to the churches which Dan Taylor had found in the Midland Counties six years before, and ten were ministers of churches connected with the older denomination. Dan Taylor, though reckoned as one of this older religious body, had only become associated with them through his acquaintance and official relation with the Lincolnshire branch of their churches.

Henceforth the two currents of religious activity intermingled; but while that current was broader which flowed out from the Leicestershire spring, the current was more rapid and ener-

getic—a kind of moral and religious eagre—which arose in the northern county. In other words, Dan Taylor now became the ruling spirit of the whole community. He was their great organiser, their controversialist, their oracle. Taylor made the first attempts to give the General Baptists of the New Connexion a literature of their own, an attempt which was very little appreciated, partly owing to the foolish prejudice against all literature among the members, who comprised the early churches of the denomination. He presided for fifteen years over their Institution for the Education of Ministers. Several of his sons-in-law took prominent places in the New Connexion, and one of them afterwards followed his steps as editor of the magazine of the denomination, and tutor of the college. He assisted at no less than thirty-eight ordinations, was chairman of their annual meetings for nearly half a century, and was one of their most frequent and popular preachers, and the writer of many of its Circular Letters. No man did more to extend the denomination he so dearly loved; and the work which he did at Birchliffe in 1764, was the work which, in a different fashion, and on a larger scale, he did afterwards for the whole Connexion. The life of Dan Taylor is the history of the New Connexion of General Baptists for more than half a century. He died in London, December 1816, aged 78, and was buried in Bunhill Fields.

Nothing is more surprising than the amount of work Dan Taylor was able to accomplish, and unless he had been a rigid economist of time, notwithstanding his natural robustness, he could not have got through half his work. Moreover, there was never any period of his life, when his time was fairly his own; now it was largely engrossed by a school, now by a farm, now by a shop, and now by the training of young ministers. Three or four times a year he made special preaching journeys, and before his removal from Halifax to London he had travelled twenty-five thousand miles in preaching the Gospel. He rarely preached, on these special journeys, less than nine times in

the week. His love for the Scriptures was a distinguishing trait in his character. Fearing that his sight was altogether failing, he determined to commit the whole of the Bible to memory; and had actually accomplished part of his design, when his recovery dissipated his apprehensions."

There are six articles of faith which were propounded by Dan Taylor, as the basis of union in 1770, and which will be found in a later part of this volume. We prefer to insert here the exposition of their opinions by the Rev. Dr. Underwood, of Chilwell College, Nottinghamshire. It is given in a paper read before the first autumnal session of the Baptist Union at Birmingham, Oct. 1864. Dr. Underwood says:—

"Although I have no commission from any of my associated brethren to confess what they believe, I do not hesitate to present a summary of the sentiments which I think to be those of the denomination generally. 'To us there is one God, of whom are all things, and we for Him.' But we hold that in this one God there are three subsistents, 'called Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,' who have proper Deity in themselves, and full communion with one another. Whether each of these subsistents should be called a person, and the whole three a Trinity, has been questioned by some; but as the Father is said to be 'a person,' and as the Son is said to be 'the express image of His person,' and as the Spirit is neither Father nor Son, many of us feel no scruple in speaking of the Trinity, and in saying that there are three persons in one God.

"We maintain the proper Divinity and perfect humanity of Christ, teaching that Christ is God, that Christ was man, and that He was God and man in one person, 'plain to be distinguished, impossible to be divided.' We maintain the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit, and that it is His office to enlighten, convict, and renew the sinner, and to sanctify, confirm, and comfort the saint.

"Concerning man, we believe that he was formed in the

moral image of his Maker, but that he lost his original by one act of disobedience; that from that act, which constituted the 'fall' of man, the whole race inherit an evil nature—are prone to sinful deeds—and do, on attaining the age of accountability, wilfully rebel against God. But while we believe that the moral stain contracted by the first transgression has been transmitted to all their posterity, we do not believe that the *guilt* of their offence is imputed to any of their descendants. . . .

"We believe that the death of Christ was voluntary and vicarious, and that in connection therewith His obedience and sufferings constitute the real atonement, satisfying the Divine law, reconciling the offended God to man, and the offended man to God; that the whole world, being guilty before God, is under condemnation to eternal death, *yet that all penitents who trust in Christ have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.*

"But the distinguishing tenet from which we take our name, General, which was prefixed to our ancient deeds, covenants, which we have inserted in many of our title-deeds, and which we would gladly proclaim on the housetops, is—*the love of God in Christ to all mankind.*

"On the liberty of man to choose the life or the death, the blessing or the curse, set before him, we have so strongly spoken as to provoke opponents to call us '*Free-willers*. But . . . the first meeting which was held by the founders of the denomination called itself an Assembly of *Free Grace* General Baptists;' and that this was a proper appellation may be seen from what all our predecessors have said in their Confessions. . . .

"Our ecclesiastical polity is in close agreement with other Congregationalists. . . . In former days pastors and deacons were set apart to their duties by counsel and prayer with the imposition of hands; but now the choice of deacons is sometimes not a very spirited proceeding, and the ordination

solemnity, in the case of pastors, is supplanted too often by a semi-social hybrid called 'the recognition tea-meeting.'

"In the matter of communion, our practice is far from being uniform. Until within a very few years nearly all our churches were close and strict; but now some are so open as to allow any person professing godliness to sit with them at the Lord's table. Several other churches invite those to participate who are known to be in actual membership with Pædobaptist communities; while the rest, and probably the majority, hold to the early custom of confining the privilege to those who had 'been buried with Christ in baptism.'

"Since the founding of the Connexion each church now belonging to it has been admitted on its own application; but before the vote for admission is taken in the Annual Association, such application is accompanied by the recommendation of the district conference. The Association is an assembly of ministers who are members *ex officio*, and of representatives who are sent by the churches in a certain ratio. This assembly rotates, and is never held in one place oftener than once in seven years. The affiliated churches are expected to contribute to the support of the institutions of the Body, such as the Home and the Orissa Missions, and the College. If any church declines to render this support to any one of these institutions, the power of speaking or voting on questions relating thereto is forfeited. The Association acknowledges the perfect independence of the churches, and scrupulously avoids all synodic action which could infringe their freedom. But if any church should deny the right of the ministers and representatives to interfere with it in the event of its departure from the Christian faith and morality, such a church would be marked and admonished; and if it continued contumacious, it would be cut off. In like manner, any minister convicted of flagrant heresy, or gross moral pravity, even if his people should adhere to him, would be openly disowned, and his name would be removed from the yearly ministerial list."

CHAPTER IV.

THE BAPTISTS AND LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE.

THE Baptists occupy an honourable position in the history of religious freedom. They were the first to assert, in this country, the right of every man to worship God as his conscience dictated, and the first to show that that right was based both on reason and Scripture. When England was still suffering from the vexations and miseries of persecution for religious opinions, Baptists lifted up their earnest, but at that time unheeded, protests against its injustice and tyranny. Some of these protests were issued at great peril to the writers, and others were the plaints of men who, for their Baptist opinions, were condemned to fester in loathsome prisons. All bear witness to an unconquerable love of freedom, which at length bore its priceless fruits. It would, therefore, be ungrateful in their descendants, who are now sitting under the shadow of the tree which these courageous pioneers watered with their blood, not to hold their names in everlasting remembrance.

Leonard Busher, the writer of the earliest extant treatise in favour of the broadest religious liberty, was a Baptist. There can be no question as to the truth of this statement, since it rests on his own emphatic words. "Christ," says Busher, in the treatise to which we refer, "will have His ministers to preach and to teach the people of all nations . . . and to

baptize in His name all who believe." Still more explicitly he says in another place: "Such as willingly receive the truth, Christ hath commanded to be baptized in water; that is, dipped for the dead in water."

Of Busher's personal history very little is known. He was a citizen of London in the later days of Queen Elizabeth, and fled to the Continent on account of his religious opinions. In the time of her successor, James the First, he returned to London; but "found it hard to get his daily bread, with his weak body and feeble hands." Probably, as his name suggests, of Walloon extraction; a man of some learning; a controversialist, entering the lists with Robinson of Amsterdam, and the Brownists; too poor to print the books he had written, and yet somehow getting printed the one which places his name in the foremost ranks of advocates for religious liberty—such is absolutely all the record we have of the brave and gentle Leonard Busher.

His treatise was presented to the King and Parliament in 1614; but so far as both were concerned, very little came of its presentation. A valiant Independent, in the days of the Civil War, Henry Burton by name, a man who had suffered under the tyranny of Laud, and was among the earliest of his own religious party to claim and allow full liberty of conscience, reprinted the treatise in 1646, with an address prefixed to it for the special benefit of the Presbyterians. At that time the Presbyterians were in the ascendant, and were eagerly using their power to repress all who differed from them. The title of Busher's treatise is,

"Religious Peace; or, A Plea for Liberty of Conscience."

After a short preface "to the King, and to the princely and right honourable Parliament," for whom he wishes "the wisdom of Solomon, the zeal of Josias, and the mercy of Christ, with the salvation of their spirits in the day of the Lord Jesus," Busher assigns seventeen reasons against persecution, and

concludes with "a design for a peaceable reconciliation of those that differ in opinion."

Busher's main object by this petition was to secure a repeal of the odious and oppressive, or as he calls them, "the anti-Christian, Romish, and cruel laws," then in force against all Nonconformists. Every kind of argument is used to influence the minds of the King and his Parliament. We shall, perhaps, best illustrate the contents of this remarkable plea for liberty of conscience by grouping together some of its main features, rather than by pretending to give any complete analysis of the whole book.

Busher quotes widely opposite examples of toleration. There is the example of the Emperor Constantine: "I read that he wrote to the Bishop of Rome, that he would not force and constrain any man to the faith, but only admonish, and commit judgment to God." There is that of a Turkish emperor. "A Bishop of Rome would have constrained him to the Christian faith, but the Emperor answered, 'I believe that Christ was an excellent prophet; but He did never, as far as I understand, command that men should, with the power of weapons, be constrained to believe His law; and verily I also do force no man to believe Mahomet's law." Busher adds to this the statement: "Also I read the Jews, Christians, and Turks are tolerated in Constantinople, and yet are peaceable, yet so contrary the one to the other. If this be so, how much more ought Christians not to force one another to religion? *And how much more ought Christians to tolerate Christians, whereas the Turks do tolerate them? Shall we be less merciful than the Turks? Or shall we learn* (teach) *the Turks to persecute Christians? It is not only unmerciful, but unnatural and abominable, yea, monstrous, for one Christian to vex and destroy another for difference and question of religion.*" Even "Pagans," Busher also says, "will not persecute one another for religion; though, as I read, there be above three thousand sorts of them." He follows up the allusion to pagan toleration with a home-

thrust at the King about the mistakes made in England, "both by King Henry and Queen Mary, who thought themselves defenders of the faith, and thought they burned heretics and heresy, when they burned men and their books. But now you see, and must acknowledge, that they were persecutors of the faith, instead of defenders thereof."

The uselessness of persecution is pointed out in various ways. "Neither the King nor the bishops can command faith, any more than they can command the winds." If you "force men to go to church against their consciences, they will believe as they did before when they come. . . . It is not the gallows, nor the prisons, nor burning, nor banishing, that can defend the Apostolic faith . . . . The Dutch princes and peers say: 'that force, sword, and gallows, in matter of religion, is a good means to spill blood, and to make an uproar in the land; but not to bring any man from one faith to another.'" Even kings enjoy no exemption from other people: "They are men as well as kings, and Christ hath ordained the same means of faith for kings as for subjects."

Persecution is fraught with mischief to the State. "If persecution continues, then the King and the State shall have against their will, many dissemblers in authority and office, both in court, city, and country. . . . Most men will conform themselves for fear of persecution, although in their hearts they hate and detest the religion whereto they are forced by law; the which is very dangerous and hurtful, both to the King and to the State, in time of temptation from beyond the seas, and in rebellion at home. *For they that are not faithful to God in their religion, will never be faithful to the King and the State in their allegiance:* especially being tried by a great reward, or by a mighty rebel."

Persecution is "a notable mark of the false Church, and her bishops and ministers." "All bishops that force princes and people to receive their faith and discipline, do, with Judas, go against Christ and His members, with swords, staves, and

halberds." "Christ saith, 'He that will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as a heathen man, and a publican.' He saith not, 'Burn, banish, or imprison him:' that is Antichrist's ordinance." "With Scripture, and not with fire and sword, your Majesty's bishops and ministers ought to be armed and weaponed." "Those bishops which persuade the King and Parliament to burn, banish, and imprison for difference of religion, are bloodsuckers and manslayers." "The ministers and bishops of Antichrist cannot abide nor endure the faith and discipline of the Apostolic Church, because it will be the overthrow of their blasphemous and spiritual lordships, and of their anti-Christian and bloody kingdom; and therefore are they so fiery hot and zealous for the Catholic or anti-Christian faith and practice."

Busher is very careful to show, by innumerable passages, that all Christ's teaching and example are directly against persecution. "Christ came into the world to *save* sinners, and not to destroy them, though they be blasphemers; seeing the Lord may convert them, as He did Saul." "Christ saith, 'Teach all nations;' not, 'Force all nations.'" "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, and not by the King's sword." "Christ overcame the devil and his ministers by the Word of God, and by a good, meek, and gentle life." "And it is to be well observed, that when Christ would have preached the word of salvation to the Gadarenes, He did not compel them when they refused; but finding them unwilling to receive Him and His Word, he turned from them without hurting them. Also when James and John saw that some of the Samaritans refused Christ, they wanted to have commanded fire from heaven to consume them, as Elias did; but Christ rebuked them and said, 'Ye know not of what spirit ye are; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.'" "Christ sent His ministers as lambs among wolves, and not as wolves among lambs." These are a few only of the many passages that might be quoted.

By giving up persecution, Busher assures the King that he will "prevent his land from a great impoverishing and weakening by the loss of the faithfullest subjects and friends, who, not having here freedom of conscience to follow the Apostolic faith, must depart the land for some free country." Still further, "the Jews, to the great profit of his realm, shall then inhabit and dwell under his Majesty's dominions." The King may even go further yet, and grant, without damage to the State, "liberty for every person, yea, Jews and Papists, to write, dispute, confer, and reason, print and publish any matter touching religion, either for or against whomsoever; always provided"—and the proviso reads strangely in our days—"they alledge no Fathers for proof of any point of religion, but only the Holy Scriptures."

Many good things are suggested as likely to follow this repeal of Popish laws and canons. One of these is stated in a manner which reveals the quiet humour of this grave and valiant man. It is this—the possible action of such repeal on the bishops. Busher could see little difference between the manners of bishops, whether Popish or Protestant. "Pope, in Latin (Italian) is *papa*, and *papa* signifies father in English. All the bishops in our land are called 'Reverend Fathers;' therefore all the bishops in our land are called 'Reverend Popes.' So many 'Lord Bishops,' so many 'Reverend Fathers,' so many 'Reverend Popes.'" But such would be the influence upon the bishops' minds of this toleration, that after a time, suggests Busher, "*All those bishops who unfeignedly fear God, and truly love the King, will haste and make speed to come to his Majesty for pardon; acknowledging the truth of this book; confessing their ignorance and arrogance in God's Word;* and in compelling the people to hear the Word preached, and for imprisoning, burning, banishing, and hanging for religion, contrary to the mind of Christ; and also for stopping the mouths of men, and burning their books, that preach and write contrary to their minds and wills." Busher further adds, anticipating the very words of their penitence: "Yea, it may be, they will

also confess and say, 'Oh, most gracious King! we beseech your Majesty to show us mercy, and to forgive us our spiritual pride and ambition, in that we have thus long usurped the blasphemous titles of 'Spiritual Lords,' and 'Lord Graces;' the which titles we now, to the glory of God and honour of the King, do, with unfeigned hearts, confess to be due and belong only to Christ Himself. And that the name and title of 'Spiritual Lord' cannot belong to any earthly creature; no, not to the King or Emperor, because it is an heavenly name and title. *How much less can it belong, or be due to us, your Majesty's unworthy subjects and scholars?* . . . Also we do confess that our pomp and state wherein we now live, is more like the bishops of the Catholic Church of Antichrist than any way like the bishops of the Apostolic Church of Christ, unto whom we acknowledge we ought to be made like, and also to be qualified with the like gifts and graces of the Spirit; or else in no case can we be meet bishops for the Church of Christ, as the Apostle plainly teacheth both to Timothy and Titus, &c. And we must further acknowledge and confess that our houses, households, and revenues are more fit and meet for princes, dukes, and earls, than for disciples of Christ. Wherefore, being moved and stirred up hereto by the fear of God, *we earnestly beseech your Majesty and Parliament also to disburden us of this great pomp and state, and of our great and prince-like houses, households, and revenues*, that so we may be made equal and conformable to the ministers of Christ; and then we shall have both hope and comfort of the world to come, although but little in this, *except your Majesty and Parliament do grant free liberty of conscience*.'"

Five reasons are then supposed to be assigned by the penitent bishops for conceding this freedom, the last being "the great gain to the King and the country from the relinquishment of their own (the bishops') revenues, 'more profit and commodity than we or any man is able to express." The sarcasm reaches its drollest point when the bishops are said "to desire all his

Majesty's subjects, both great and small, in all love and fear of God, *not to be offended, or in any way moved or grieved*, when they shall see such a reformation in us as that famous king, Henry the Eighth, did make of our lordly brethren, the abbots and their clergy. For indeed such a reformation ought to come among us clergy." Busher expresses a hope that all this surrender of their wealth may come about "without compulsion and constraint." But if this should not be, "that God would open the King's heart" to compel the bishops to disgorge their enormous wealth. A third course, however, suggests itself to Busher's mind: "If free liberty of conscience be granted, the spiritual kingdom of these idol-bishops will, in time, fall to the ground of itself, as the idol Dagon fell before the ark." Events have abundantly justified Busher's prediction. The spiritual power of the English bishops in our day is absolutely *nil*. Even their own party sneeringly describe them as "mitred old gentlemen."

We cannot close our sketch of this treatise without pointing out the incidental confirmation which one passage in it supplies to a hundred other testimonies of the profligacy and debauchery of the times, the poison of the Court of James the First descending into and defiling every grade of society. "If," says Busher, when thinking of the dark condition of England at that time, "If the holy laws of God's Word be practised and executed after Christ's will, then shall neither king, prince, nor people be destroyed for difference of religion. Then treason and rebellion, as well as burning, banishing, hanging, or imprisonment for difference of religion, will cease, and be laid down. Then shall not men, women, and youth be hanged for theft. Then shall not the poor, lame, sick, and weak ones be stocked (put in the stocks) and whipped; neither shall the poor, stranger, fatherless, and widows be driven to beg from place to place; neither shall the lame, sick, and weak persons suffer such misery, and be forsaken of their kindred, as now they be. Then shall not murder, whoredom, and adultery be bought out for money. Then shall not the great defraud and wrong the

small; neither the rich oppress the poor by usury and little wages. . . . Then shall not servants be forced from marriage bonds, nor yet be bound to servitude longer than six years; neither shall they be brought up contrary to covenant, nor posted from one quarter or one year to another, for their freedom, and in the end be forced to buy it of their masters, or else to go without it too."

It has been conjectured that Leonard Busher was a member of Mr. Helwys's church; but on what grounds does not appear. It is, however, worthy of notice, that the year after Busher issued his *Plea for Liberty of Conscience*, some members of this church published another pamphlet, "proving," as the title-page declares, "by the law of God and of the land, and by King James's own testimonies, that no man ought to be persecuted for his religion, so he testify his allegiance by the oath appointed by law." The title of the pamphlet is,

"Persecution for Religion, judged and condemned."

The resemblance between the style of this book, and one written by John Morton, a member of Mr. Helwys's church, has led to the conclusion that Morton himself was the author, although, at the end of the "Epistle," or preface, the subscription runs as follows: "By Christ's unworthy witnesses, His majesty's faithful subjects, commonly (but most falsely) called, Anabaptists."

The book is written in the form of a dialogue between Anti-Christian and Christian. "Why come you not to church?" is the question started by Anti-Christian; and this leads to a discussion on the nature of worship, and so to the question of persecution. Anti-Christian thinks he has his opponent on the hip, when he says, "It is manifest in the Scriptures, by the example of the Apostle Peter smiting Ananias and Sapphira to death, and of the Apostle Paul striking Elymas, the sorcerer, blind, and also by delivering Hymeneus and Alexander unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that punishment upon the

body may be used, and the flesh destroyed. For if it were lawful for them to smite to death, and the like, though by extraordinary means, then it must be lawful for us by ordinary means, since extraordinary means now fail. If you say it be not lawful for us, then you must say it was not lawful for them; and that were to accuse them of laying a false foundation, which none fearing God will affirm."

Christian's reply to this specious statement is very adroit and unanswerable: "I dare not once admit of such a thought, as to disallow the truth of that foundation which the Apostles, as skilful master-builders, have laid; but for your argument of Peter's extraordinary smiting of Ananias and Sapphira, *he neither laid hand upon them, nor threatened them by word*, only declared what should befall them from God; and, therefore, serveth nothing to your purpose. Also that of Paul to Elymas, he laid no hands upon him, but only declared the Lord's hand upon him, and the judgment that should follow. *If you can so pronounce, and it so come to pass upon any, do it;* and then it may be you may be accounted master-builders, and layers of a new foundation, or another Gospel."

In the course of the dialogue the writer denounces the pride, luxury, and oppression of the bishops, protests strongly against the political errors of the Papists, and condemns those who, through fear of persecution, comply with any external worship contrary to their conscience. The speeches of the King are quoted to illustrate his professions of religious toleration, a thing easy enough to do; but it would be extremely difficult to point out instances wherein his actions agreed with his professions. A part of the dialogue is taken up with the "illustration of the writer's opinion that the spiritual power of England is the image of the spiritual cruel power of Rome, or that beast mentioned in the thirteenth chapter of the Revelations;" and the concluding portion is especially intended to meet and answer the objections made by the Brownists and Robinson against the creed and practice of the General Baptists.

A very noteworthy declaration on the subject of liberty of conscience occurs in "the Epistle" which is prefixed to the dialogue, and is addressed "to all that truly wish Jerusalem's prosperity, and Babylon's destruction." The words are these: "We do unfeignedly acknowledge the authority of earthly magistrates, God's blessed ordinance, and that all earthly authority and command appertains to them. Let them command what they will, we must obey, either to do or to suffer, upon pain of God's displeasure, besides their punishment. *But all men must let God alone with His right, which is to be Lord and Lawgiver to the soul*, and not command obedience to God, where He commandeth none. And this is only that which we dare not but maintain upon the peril of our souls, which is greater than bodily affliction." In the dialogue itself Christian afterward affirms, "If I take any authority from the King's majesty, let me be judged worthy of my desert; but if I defend the authority of Christ Jesus over men's souls, which appertaineth to no mortal man whatsoever, then you know, that whosoever would rob Him of that honour which is not of this world, He will tread them under foot. Earthly authority belongs to earthly kings; but spiritual authority belongeth to that spiritual King, who is King of kings."

There had been no Session of Parliament between 1614 and 1620; but driven by his urgent necessities, the King summoned both Houses in the year last named. In this year a third appeal was made by the Baptists for religious liberty, in

"A most Humble Supplication;"

or, as the title amply declares—"*A most Humble Supplication of many of the King's Royal Subjects, ready to testify all Civil Obedience, by the Oath of Allegiance or otherwise, and that of Conscience, who are Persecuted (only for differing in Religion) contrary to Divine and Human Testimonies.*" The Baptists had good reason to plead earnestly for liberty of conscience at this period. They were not only themselves everywhere suffering

from persecutions, but even the author of these arguments against persecutions was, at the time of writing his book, "a close prisoner in Newgate." "Having not the use of pen and ink," says Roger Williams, "he wrote these arguments in milk, in sheets of paper brought to him by the woman, his keeper, from a friend in London as the stopples of his milk bottle. In such paper, written with milk, nothing appeared; but the way of reading it by fire being known to his friend who received the papers, he transcribed and kept together the papers, although the author himself could not correct nor view what himself had written."

The "Most Humble Supplication," is divided into ten chapters, wherein the Baptists again set forth their opinions of the rule of faith, the method of ascertaining its teaching, and the folly, unlawfulness, and unscripturalness of persecution: "(1) The rule of faith is contained in the Holy Scriptures, not in any church, council, prince, or potentate, nor in any mortal man whatsoever; (2) the interpreter of this rule is the Scriptures, and the Spirit of God in whomsoever; (3) the Spirit of God, to understand and interpret the Scriptures, is given to all and every person that fear and obey God, of what degree soever they be, and not to the wicked; (4) these men are commonly, and the most part the simple, poor, and despised, &c.; (5) the learned in human learning do commonly and for the most part err, and know not the truth, but persecute it and the professors of it, and therefore are no further to be followed than we see them agree with the truth; (6) persecution for cause of conscience is against the doctrine of Jesus Christ, the King of kings; (7) against the profession and practice of famous princes; (8) condemned by ancient State writers, yea, by Puritans and Papists; (9) it is no prejudice to the Commonwealth if freedom of religion were suffered, but would make it flourish; (10) lastly, kings are not deprived of any power given them of God, when they maintain freedom for cause of conscience."

In the seventh chapter, the Baptists quote the testimony of

Stephen, the liberal and tolerant King of Poland, who declared, "I am king of men, not of consciences; a commander of bodies, not of souls." It was this same distinguished sovereign who, though a convert to Catholicism, strenuously rejected the counsels of the Jesuits to persecute, and whose favourite saying was this, "There are three things which God has reserved to Himself—creative power, the knowledge of future events, and dominion over conscience." But the foremost place is given in this chapter to the sayings of King James himself. The Baptists write, "We beseech your Majesty, we may relate your own worthy sayings, in your Majesty's speech at Parliament, 1609. Your Highness saith, 'It is a rule in divinity, that God never loves to plant His Church by violence and bloodshed,' &c. And in your Highness's apology for the Oath of Allegiance, speaking of such Papists as take the oath, thus, 'I gave a good proof that I intended no persecution against them for conscience' cause, but only desired to be secured (of them) for civil obedience, which, for conscience' cause, they were bound to perform.' And speaking of Blackwell, the archpriest, your Majesty saith, 'It was never my intention to say anything to the said archpriest's charge, as I have never done to any, for cause or conscience.' And in your Highness's *Exposition of Rev. xx.*, printed in 1588, and after in 1603, your Majesty truly saith, 'Sixthly, the compassing of the saints, and besieging of the beloved city, declareth unto us a certain note of a false Church to be persecution; for they came to seek the faithful, the faithful are those that are sought; the wicked are the besiegers, the faithful are the besieged.'"

But King James could talk liberally enough when it suited his purpose. There is no evidence that he was equally liberal in his actions. It shows, therefore, great courage in these despised and persecuted Baptists daring to close their "Humble Supplication" with these words to the King: "You may make and mend your own laws, and be judge and punisher of the transgressors thereof; but you cannot make and mend God's laws,

they are perfect already; you may not add nor diminish, nor be judge nor monarch of His Church; that is Christ's right. He left neither you, nor any mortal man His deputy, but only the Holy Ghost, as your Highness acknowledgeth. And whosoever erreth from the truth, his judgment is set down, and the time thereof. This, then, is the sum of our humble petition, that your Majesty would be pleased not to persecute your faithful subjects, who are obedient unto you in all civil worship and service, for walking in the practice of what God's Word requireth of us for His spiritual worship, as we have faith: knowing as your Majesty truly writeth in your *Meditation on Matt. xxvii.*, in these words: 'We can use no spiritual worship nor prayer, than can be available to us without faith.'" It was no unskilful hand that thus feathered the last arrow with the King's own words; but, so far as liberty of conscience was concerned, all arrows proved in vain, the King in no case relaxing the iron hand of persecution which held the Baptists, and others, in its relentless grip.

Two or three other Baptist testimonies in favour of religious freedom were published during the time of the Civil War and the Restoration. A passing glance at one of these will show that there is an unbroken chain of witnesses to be found among the Baptists from the days of James the First, until the eve of the famous Act of Toleration. Not that Baptists, during all this period, were alone in their testimony; but they were its earliest and its most faithful and persistent advocates. Jeremy Taylor's *Liberty of Prophesying* appeared in 1646, and in the same year Mr. Dell expressed, in his sermon before the House of Commons, a clear and decided appeal for religious freedom. Meanwhile, the Independents were growing in their attachment to the same noble cause; and more than one public advocate of it arose in their midst.

In 1647, Mr. Samuel Richardson, who was co-pastor of the first Calvinistic Baptist Church in England, published a book under the title *Fifty Questions propounded to the*

Assembly of Divines. This was afterwards issued under the title of

"The Necessity of Toleration in Matters of Religion."

Like many of the books published in those days, a whole table of its contents appears in the title-page of this very rare tract. As a curiosity of its kind, we transcribe the whole: "*The Necessity of Toleration in all Matters of Religion; or, certain questions propounded to the Synod, tending to prove that Corporeal Punishment ought not to be inflicted upon such as hold Errors in Religion, and that in matters of Religion, men ought not to be compelled, but have liberty and freedom. Here is also a copy of the Edict of the Emperors Constantinus and Licinius, and containing the Reasons that enforced them to grant unto all men liberty to choose and follow what Religion they thought best. Also, here is the faith of the Assembly of Divines, as it was taken out of the exactest copy of their practice, with the Non-conformists' Answer why they cannot receive and submit to the said faith.*"

After offering five reasons in favour of the proposition,—"that religion ought to be free,"—Mr. Richardson submits no less than *seventy* questions to the Synod. The nature of all these questions, as the title-page indicates, tends to prove "that corporeal punishments ought not to be inflicted upon such as hold Errors in Religion." We give a few, as a fair example of the rest:—

"5. Whether it be wisdom and safe to make such sole judges in matters of religion who are not infallible, but as liable to err as others?

"8. If the magistrates may determine what is truth; whether we must not believe and live by the magistrate's faith, and change our religion at their pleasures? And if nothing must be preached, nor printed, nor allowed to pass, unless certain men please and approve, and give their allowance thereto,

under their hands,—whether such do not, by this practice, tell God that unless He will reveal His truth first to them, they will not suffer it to be published, and so not to be known? . . .

"21. Whether it be not better for us that a patent were granted to monopolise all the corn and cloth, and to have it measured out to us at their price and pleasure—which yet were intolerable—as for men to appoint and measure out unto us, what and how much we shall believe and practise in matters of religion?

"22. Whether there be not the same reason that *they* should be appointed by *us*, what they shall believe and practise in religion, as for *them* to do so for *us*; seeing that we can give as good grounds for what we believe and practise, as they can do for what they would have, if not better?

"29. Whether it be not vain for us to have Bibles in English, if, contrary to our understanding of them, we must believe as the Church believes, whether it be right or wrong?

"36. Whether the Scriptures appoint any other punishment to be inflicted upon heretics, than rejection and excommunication?

"56. Whether it be not a horrible thing that a free division of England may not have so much liberty as is permitted to a Turk in this kingdom; who although he denies Christ, yet he can live quietly amongst us here? And is it not a great ingratitude of this kingdom to deny this liberty to such as are friends, and have been means in their persons and estates, to save this England from destruction and desolation? Oh, England, England! Oh that thou wert wise to know the things that belong to thy prosperity and peace, before it be too late! The hand of God is against thee. How have we slain one another; and who knows but this is come upon us for troubling, undoing, despising, and banishing the people of God into so many wildernesses?

"61. Whether the priest's practice be not contrary to the

Apostle's practice? Take one instance: the Apostles dipped, that is, baptized, persons *after* they believed and confessed their faith; whereas these sprinkle persons *before* they believe, yea, before they can speak. They (the Apostles) baptized persons in the river; these (the priests) sprinkle water upon their faces. Yet, if you will believe them, they are the successors of Apostles, and follow their steps."

Mr. Richardson, in the next part of his book, contends for the supremacy of Christ in His own Church, and for the excommunication of magistrates themselves, though members of churches, if they deserve it. "Sins of magistrates," says Richardson, "are hateful and condemned. It is a paradox, that a magistrate may be punished by the Church, and yet that they are judges of the Church." True religion demands from the magistrate a three-fold duty: "Approbation, with a tender respect to the truth and the professors of it; personal submission of his soul to the power of Jesus and His government; and protection of them and their estates from violence and injury." Even to a false religion he owes "permission and protection of person and goods." Richardson afterwards answers the objection that "the kings of Judah compelled men to serve the Lord, and kings may now compel, &c., showing that only Jews were compelled, and not strangers; that the Jews even were not to do anything but what they knew and confessed to be their duty; that if Jewish kings did compel, their actions were not moral, and so to be imitated; that they did not imprison schismatics, Pharisees, Herodians, and others; that they were directed by infallible prophets; and that Christ has nowhere set down that magistrates should compel all to His religion. In the latter part of his reply, Richardson asks, with shrewd humour, "*Is there no better cure of pain in the head than beating out one's brains?*"

Milton declared that "new presbyter was old priest writ large;" and many good men found this out to their cost. "Your argument is authority," says Richardson to Mr.

Presbyter; "what you say must be an oracle of all men to be deferred to without opposition. What is contrary to you is heresy, *ipso facto*, to be punished with faggot and flaming fire;" "such as cannot dance after your pipe, and rule in your way, you judge heretics, and they must appear before your dreadful tribunal, to receive your reproof, which is sharp and terrible, and strikes at our liberties, estates, and lives." "You want still to use the sword." "We had as good be under the Pope as under your Presbyterian check, . . . since you will suffer none to live quietly and comfortably but those of your way." *

* Richardson, in his *Plain Dealing*, &c., speaks a strong word in praise of Cromwell's services to his country and his personal qualities as a man and a governor, calling special attention to his tolerant spirit. The words are the more valuable because they are the testimony of one personally acquainted with Cromwell, and an eye-witness of the facts he relates. "His Highness," says Richardson, speaking of the Lord Protector, "aimeth at the general good of the nation, *and the just liberty of every man.* He is also a godly man, and one that feareth God and escheweth evil; though he is not, nor no man else, without human frailty. He is faithful to the saints, and to these nations, in whatsoever he hath undertaken from the beginning of the wars. He hath owned the poor despised people of God, and advanced many of them to a better way and means of living. He hath been an advocate for the Christians, and hath done them much good in writing, speaking, pleading for their liberty in the Long Parliament, and fighting for their liberty. He, with others, hath hazarded his life, estate, family; and since he hath refused great offers of wealth and worldly glory for the sake and welfare of the people of God. God hath given him more than ordinary wisdom, strength, courage, and valour. God hath been always with him, and gives him great successes. He is fitted to bear burden, and to endure all opposition and contradictions that may stand with public safety. He is a terror to his enemies; *he hath a large heart, spirit, and principle, that will hold all that fear the Lord, though of different opinions and practices in religion, and seek their welfare.* It is the honour of princes to pity the miserable, to relieve the oppressed, and the wrongs of the poor; he is humble, and despiseth not any because poor; and is ready to hear and help them. He is a merciful man, full of pity and bounty to the poor. A liberal heart is more precious than heaven or earth. He gives in money to maimed

It would be easy to show that Baptists have persistently advocated the fullest liberty of conscience from the days of James the First to the days of William the Third; but enough has been given to justify the Baptist claim to an early, a clear, and an emphatic advocacy by their forefathers of religious freedom.

soldiers, widows, and orphans, and poor families, a thousand pounds a week to supply their wants: he is not a lover of money, which is a singular and extraordinary thing. He will give, and not hoard up money, as some do. I am persuaded there is not a better friend to these nations and people of God among men, and that there is not any man so unjustly abused and censured as he is. And some that now find fault with him, may live to see and confess that what I have herein written is truth; and when he is gathered to his fathers, shall weep for the want of him."

CHAPTER V.

PERSECUTION OF THE BAPTISTS IN ENGLAND.

BAPTISTS enjoy the enviable distinction of having excited the hostility and suffered from the oppression of every dominant religious party in England, from the days of Henry the Eighth to the days of the Revolution in 1688. It is not difficult to understand how this has happened. The Baptists argued that the Church of God should be a community of godly men; that faith is the gift of God, and not to be compelled by force of arms; that only those rites sanctioned or commanded by Christ and His Apostles are binding upon His people; and that the only Lawgiver of the Church is Christ Himself. Each party had, therefore, its own reason for hating the Baptists; and as each had yet to learn the true nature of religious freedom, each oppressed and persecuted in turn. Believers in national State Churches, in the power of the secular magistrates to punish error, in the authority of bishops or synods to decree rites and ceremonies, and in the supremacy of the Sovereign as Head of the Church, all had their own ground for repugnance to the Baptists. We see this in their persecution by

Henry the Eighth (1509—1547.)

Bitterly as he hated the Papist party, after he had broken with Rome, he was not long before he revealed a still more

bitter hatred of all Baptists, English and Continental. The year in which he became supreme head of the Established Church in England, two proclamations were published against Baptists and the followers of Zwingle. Many of the King's subjects, we are told, "had been induced and encouraged, arrogantly and superstitiously (?) to argue and dispute in open places, taverns, and ale-houses, not only upon baptism, but also upon the sacrament of the altar;" and, to put a stop to these "pestilent fellows," the King declares that, "like a godly and Catholic prince, he abhorreth and detesteth the same sects, and their wicked and abominable errors and opinions, and intendeth to proceed against such of them as be already apprehended, according to their merits, and the laws of the realm." Ten days only were allowed to all who held these "pestilent heresies" to leave the country. Close upon the heels of this followed a second proclamation still more severe. Many strangers in England, "who had been baptized in infancy, but had contemned that holy sacrament, and had presumptuously re-baptized themselves, were spreading everywhere their heresies against God and His Holy Scriptures to the great unquietness of Christendom, and perdition of innumerable Christian souls;" and the King, forsooth, "daily studying and minding above all things to save his loving subjects from falling into any erroneous opinions," warns them to depart from England within twelve days, reminds them that some of their company are already convicted, and will presently "suffer the pains of death," and threatens all other Anabaptists and Zwinglians with the same fate, if they are caught. The following year ten were put to death, and ten saved their lives by recantation. Besides these, fourteen Hollanders were burnt for holding "damnable errors drawn from an indiscreet use of the Scriptures."

Four years past away, when a third proclamation was issued, this time appointing Cranmer and eight others to make diligent search for Anabaptist men, books, and letters. Full power

was given to Cranmer and his party to deal capitally with each obstinate heretic. Books and men were, "at their pleasure," to be committed to the flames. Little seems to have come of this; since a month later a fifth proclamation was issued, forbidding unlicensed books from being imported or printed, and singling out for special condemnation the works of Baptists and Zwinglians. The same month, November 1538, some of these hated and persecuted people were burnt in Smithfield; and the following month, in consequence of the King's letter to the justices of the peace throughout the country, in which increased rigour was enjoined against the unfortunate Baptists, numbers fled to Holland, where they were betrayed. On the 7th of January, 1539, fifteen women were drowned, and sixteen men beheaded. The King, still failing in his efforts, now adopts a milder course. He is pleased to speak of himself, as "like a most loving parent much moved with pity" for the "many simple persons" who have been seduced by Anabaptists and Sacramentarians, and offers "all and singular such persons" his royal forgiveness. This parental feeling did not last many months, since in July, 1540, those who declared "that infants ought not to be baptized," were specially exempted from all benefit in a general pardon. But neither threats nor cajolery prevented the spread of Baptist opinions. Like the Israelites in Egypt, "the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and grew."

Nor did the position of Baptists much improve under the reign of

Edward the Sixth (1547—1553).

In the first year of Edward's reign, Ridley and Gardiner united together in a commission to deal with two Baptists in Kent. A Protestant Inquisition was established, with Cranmer at its head. They were to pull up "the noxious weeds of heresy." Their work was to be done with the forms of justice and in secret. They might fine, imprison, torture, and, in all

cases of obstinate heretics, hand them over to the civil power to be burnt. Four years later this commission was renewed, and in the same year Baptists were a second time excluded from a general pardon. It was this Inquisition that condemned Joan Bocher, and scattered, or tried to scatter, the congregations of Baptists gathered in Kent. Still their numbers increased. Strype tells us that "their opinions were believed by many honest meaning people;" and another writer affirms, that the articles of religion, issued just before the King's death, "were principally designed to vindicate the English Reformation from that slur and disgrace which the Anabaptists' tenets had brought upon it," a clear proof that the Baptists were, at that period, neither few nor unimportant.

The sour bigot, who next occupied the English throne, made matters worse, although Baptists were now partly lost in the common ranks of Protestants.

Mary (1553—1558)

regarded herself as a "virgin sent from heaven to rule and tame the people of England." How faithfully she executed her pretended mission, a long array of martyrs too surely testifies. Essex had the honour of yielding scores of Baptist martyrs during this gloomy reign. Humphrey Middleton, and three others, were burnt at Canterbury in 1535. "Would to God," wrote the Commissioners who visited Essex, and especially the district around Colchester, to find fresh victims for the martyr's stake—"Would to God the Honourable Council saw the face of Essex as we do see it. We have such obstinate heretics, Anabaptists, and other unruly persons here as never was heard of. If we should give it off in the midst" [that is, *cease* their disgraceful work], "we should set the country in such a roar, that my estimation, [reputation] and that of the Commissioners, shall ever be lost."

That some who avowed their belief in the doctrines commonly held by the Baptists recanted, when the rack dislocated

their limbs, and the shadow of the stake fell upon them, is no more than one might expect. It is not every woman that can bear to have her joints racked, "and lie still and not cry," as Ann Askew did; and "even suffer her bones and joints to be plucked asunder in such sort that she was nigh unto death," without breathing a single syllable of recantation. It is not every man who can face his scowling judges, when they were athirst for his blood, and extort the declaration from one of them, "that he was the most unshamefaced heretic he ever saw;" and then, after being "baited," now by one inquisitor, and now by another, go back to his prison cell, and write cheery notes to his wife, sending therewith "a threepenny token and comfits for little Katherine; two nutmegs, "a poor prisoner's gift," to some friends;" two pieces of Spanish money, and a key-log for a token to his wife, wishing "she could make means for her money to send a cheese to Peter;" and in the midst of these touching traits of human affection and home feeling, bursting out into a passionate petition, "Be fervent in prayer. Pray, pray, pray! that God would, of His mercy, put up His sword, and look on His people!" But though some could not endure the ordeal of fire, many showed, like Robert Smith, a yeoman of the guard at Windsor, the heroism of their faith.

Another instance may be given. Robert Smith had declared to Bonner, that "it was a shameful blasphemy to use such mingle-mangle" as holy oil, salt, and other things, "in baptizing young infants." John Denby shook the nerves of the same irate bishop by assuring him "that the christening of children, as then used in the Church of England, was not good, nor allowable by God's Word, but against it; likewise confirming children, giving of orders, saying of matins and evensongs, anointing of persons, making of holy bread and holy water." Denby, and his friend Newman, both of Maidstone, were pounced upon by an arch and bitter enemy of the Baptists. The persecutor had just returned from the burning of some

heretics either at Raleigh or Rochford, when he fell in with these friends, then visiting in Essex. "Even as I saw them I suspected them," says this sleuth-hound of Bonner. "And when I did examine and search them, and found about them certain letters, which I have sent you, and also a certain writing in paper what their faith is. And they confessed to me that they had forsaken and fled out of their country for religion's sake." Denby and his friend were hurried off to Bonner's palace, where both remain firm to their faith. "As touching the christening, the sacrament of baptism, which is christening of children," said Denby, "it is altered and changed. For St. John used nothing but the preaching of the Word and water, as it doth appear when Christ required to be baptized of him, and others also, who came to John to be baptized of him, as it appeareth in Matt. iii., Mark i., Luke iii. and Acts i. The chamberlain said, 'See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?' It appeareth here, that Philip had preached to him; for he said, 'Here is water.' We do not read that he asked for any cream, oil, or spittle, or conjured water, or conjured wax, no croysom, no salt, for it seemeth that Philip had preached no such things to him; for he would as well have asked for them as water; and the water was not conjured, but even as it was before. Also Acts x., 'Then answered Peter, Can any forbid water, that these should not be baptized?' Acts xvi., 'And Paul and Silas preached unto him the Word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house; and he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds; and so was he baptized, and all them of his household straightway:' where you see nothing but preaching and the Word."

Denby was condemned and burnt at Uxbridge. He gave expression to his joy, even in suffering; but a fanatical persecutor, urged by Dr. Story, hurled a faggot at his face: "wherewith, being so burnt that his face bled, he left singing, and clapt both his hands upon his face." "Truly," said the inhuman

doctor to the man who obeyed his malicious command, "Truly thou hast marred a good song." The brutal jest was only half true. Denby recovered himself; and "stretching his hands abroad, whilst the flames were licking off the skin and flesh, he burst into another song, and then resigned his soul into the hands of God, through Jesus Christ." Newman did not long survive his friend. He was burnt at the end of the same month at Saffron Walden.

Many of the Baptists who perished during this reign are purposely hidden by Fox in the crowd of other sufferers. Either from a desire to please the ruling party in his day, or from dislike to the men who could not sound his shibboleth, the Martyrologist has slighted the Baptists. He commonly omits all reference to their sufferings, or suppresses the particulars by which we could identify them as belonging to the "sect everywhere spoken against."

The last of the Tudors treated the Baptists with very little pity.

Elizabeth (1558—1603)

had scarcely been on the throne four years, before Baptists, "natural born people of the land and foreigners," were ordered to depart within twenty days, upon pain of imprisonment and loss of goods. This was a terrible blow, since many exiles, full of hope for future liberty and peace in their own land, had returned from their places of sojourn abroad. The "bright occidental star," whose rising had been hailed at home and abroad, heralded nothing but evil to the much-defamed Anabaptists. They crept out of their numerous hiding-places "an exceeding great army," * but only to find themselves in the

* The remorseless butcheries of Alva had driven many Dutch Baptists into England. "The realm," said Dr. Parker, "was full of Anabaptists, Arians," &c. Many Anglican divines of the same period give similar testimony. Aylmer speaks of "Anabaptists, with infinite swarms of other Satanistes;" Jewel, of "large and inauspicious crops of Arians and Anabaptists;" and Some, of "Anabaptist conventicles in London, and elsewhere."

presence of peril and suffering from Protestant persecutors. The virulent misrepresentations of the trimming Cranmer, the sturdy Latimer, the gentle Hooper, and the able Ridley of earlier days, were now repeated, with variations, by the judicious Hooker, the vehement and impetuous Knox, and many men of inferior reputation. The Queen's proclamation against Anabaptists was seconded by her obsequious bishops, although Parkhurst, Bishop of Norwich, forms an honourable exception. He was still regarded as "winking at heretics and Anabaptists," and special inquiry was therefore ordered to be made in his diocese.

In 1568 the Queen ordered a general visitation to be made in every parish through England, wherever strangers congregated, to hunt out Anabaptists and other teachers of what she deemed "evil doctrine." Many Germans and Flemings suffered in consequence of these repressive measures. Numbers of English Baptists also fled to the Continent for safety. About seven years after this visitation, two Dutchmen were burnt in Smithfield—Hendrick Terwoort and Jan Pieters—with the story of whose end everyone is familiar. The old and barbarous writ against heretics (*de hæretico comburendo*), which had been passed at a Parliament held in Leicester a century and a half before, had been hung up by the Queen as a menace, but it was now put into execution. Terwoort and Pieters were the only two victims who perished at the stake; but many languished in loathsome dungeons, and more Baptists were expelled from England during Elizabeth's reign, than during the reign of any other sovereign that ever sat on the throne of these realms.

The Baptists fared but badly under the Tudors; they fared little better under the Stuarts.

James the First (1603—1625)

talked liberally enough, but his practice did not agree with his words. "No State," said James the First, "can evidence that

any religion or heresy was ever extirpated by the sword, nor have I ever judged it a way of planting the truth." Yet two men were burnt for their opinions, Bartholomew Leygate and Edward Wightman. Wightman has been claimed as an Anabaptist; but so many heresies are charged upon him, some foolish, others inconsistent, that if he held them all, he must either be regarded as a madman or an idiot. James the First dealt roughly with the Baptists. From Busher's treatise, published some years after James' ascension to the throne, there is strong proof that "his Majesty's bishops and ministers had been armed and weaponed with fire and sword, and not with Scripture." It was the thought of numbers who were falling astray or into error because of persecution, that induced Helwyss and others, to return to England; and in the pamphlet of which these Anabaptists were the authors, they tell the King "that it is no small persecution to lie many years in filthy prisons, in hunger, cold, idleness, divided from wife, family, calling; left in continual miseries and temptations, so that death would be to many less persecution." A similar revelation of their condition is made in the *Humble Supplication* presented to the King in 1620:—"Our miseries are long and lingering imprisonments for many years in divers counties in England, in which many have died, and left behind them widows, and many small children; taking away our goods, and others the like, of which we can make good probation: *not for any disloyalty to your Majesty, nor hurt to any mortal man*, our adversaries themselves being judges; but only because we dare not assent unto, and practise in the worship of God, such things as we have not faith in, because it is sin against the Most High." They appeal to the King "to repeal and make void those cruel laws that persecute poor men only for matters of conscience." These general declarations will show the melancholy condition of Baptists under the meanest and most despicable sovereign that ever held an English sceptre.

His son and successor,

Charles the First (1625—1642),

bettered his father's instructions. He had scarcely been on the throne twelve months before the spies of Laud pounced upon Thomas Brewer, a zealous Baptist preacher, at Ashford, in Kent. Brewer was dragged before the High Commission Court, and committed to prison, where he remained no less than fourteen years. Laud, speaking of "the mischief" done by Brewer and others, declares, "that it is so deeply rooted, it is impossible to be plucked up on a sudden." He asks the King for "time to work it off, little by little!" It appears, however, from the account of his province sent to the King eleven years after Brewer was imprisoned, that Laud adopted anything but dilatory and indirect methods for accomplishing his ends. "I must give your Majesty to understand," says Laud, "that at and about Ashford, in Kent, the Separatists continue to hold their conventicles, notwithstanding the ex-communication of so many of them as have been disclosed. Two or three of their principal ringleaders, Brewer, Fenner, and Turner, have been long kept in prison, and it was once thought fit to proceed against them by the statute of abjuration. Not long since Brewer slipt out of prison, and went to Rochester and other parts of Kent, and held conventicles, and put a great many people into great distemper about the Church. He is taken again, and was called before the High Commission, when he stood silent; but in such a jeering, scornful manner as I scarcely ever saw the like. So in prison he remains." In 1640 Brewer was released from prison by order of the House of Commons.

It was, however, in the same year in which Brewer was set at liberty that a convocation of the bishops and clergy of York and Canterbury was held in London, with more pomp and parade than the troublesome state of the times justified. At this Synod seventeen canons were adopted. One of them, under the pretext of discouraging Popery, but evidently with

the design of crushing Dissenters, ran as follows:—"All ecclesiastical persons within their several parishes and jurisdictions shall confer privately with Popish recusants; but if private conference prevail not, the Church must and shall come to her censures; and to make way for them, such persons shall be presented at the next visitation who came not to church, and refuse to receive the holy sacrament, or who either hear or say mass; and if they remain obstinate after citation, they shall be ex-communicated. But if neither conference nor censures prevail, the Church shall then complain of them to the civil power; and this sacred (?) synod does earnestly entreat the reverend justices of assize to be careful in executing the laws, as they will answer it to God.

"The synod further declares, that the canon above-mentioned against Papists shall be in full force against all Anabaptists, Brownists, Separatists, and other sectaries, as far as they are applicable."

The following year, to the great relief of many persons, the High Courts of Commission and the Star Chamber were both dissolved by Act of Parliament. The spirit of persecution was not thereby destroyed. The Act abolishing these two courts decreed, "that none should be erected with like powers in future." Yet in the same year, Edward Barber, the minister of a congregation of Baptists in the Spittle, Bishopsgate-street, London, was committed to prison for eleven months. His only offence was the publication of "*A treatise on Baptism, or dipping; wherein is already showed*," says the title-page, "*that our Lord Christ ordained dipping, and that sprinkling of children is not according to Christ's institution; and also the invalidity of those arguments which are commonly brought to justify that practice.*" Mr. Barber had once been a clergyman in the Established Church.

The Civil War (1642—1649).

Hitherto the Baptists had suffered from the arbitrary power of Protestant and Popish sovereigns and their ready tools;

they were now to have a taste of *Presbyterian* oppression. Presbyterianism was in the ascendant at the outbreak of the Civil War, and retained its predominance among the Parliamentarians for some years. The Presbyterian ministers began to clamour for the suppression of the Sectaries, as they styled the Baptists and Independents. "If you do not labour," said Calamy, in a sermon preached before the House of Commons in 1644, "according to your duty and power to suppress the errors and heresies that are spread in the kingdom, all these errors are your errors, and these heresies are your heresies. They are your sins; and God calls for a Parliamentary repentance from you this day. You are the Anabaptists, you are the Antinomians, and it is you that hold all religions should be tolerated." "Is it persecution," said Dr. Burgess, in another sermon before the House the year after (April 30th, 1645), "Is it persecution and anti-Christianism to engage all to unity and uniformity? Doth Paul bid the Philippians beware of the concision? Doth he beseech the Romans to mark those that cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrines they have received, and avoid them? Doth he, in writing to the Galatians, wish 'I would they were even cut off that trouble you?' And is it such an heinous offence now for the faithful servants of Christ to advise you by the same course? Good heavens!" Even Baxter said, "I abhor unlimited liberty and toleration of all, and think myself easily able to prove the wickedness of it."

The same year that Dr. Burgess preached his sermon, Parliament, now filled with Presbyterians, passed an ordinance, which ran as follows:—"That no person shall be permitted to preach, who is not ordained a minister of this (the Presbyterian) or some other Reformed Church; and it is earnestly desired that Sir Thomas Fairfax take care that this ordinance be put in execution in the army." The savage and bitter Edwards, author of *Gangræna*, not content with retailing every silly and damaging story to the discredit of Baptists that any gossips

might bring him, calls upon the magistrates "to declare that Anabaptists who go dipping persons in cold water in winter, whereby persons fall sick, &c., should be proceeded against as vagrants and rogues, that go from country to country;" that in the event of "any falling sick upon their dipping, and die," the Anabaptists, who administered the rite, "should be indicted upon the statute of killing the King's subjects, and be proceeded against accordingly." But whatever note might be taken by the Presbyterian admirers of Edward's scandalous suggestions, the ordinance of the Parliament was not allowed to remain a dead letter. Thomas Lamb was one of the earliest to feel its severity.

Lamb was a native of Colchester, and, in the earlier part of the reign of Charles the First, had been dragged in chains from that city to London by the emissaries of Laud, being cited to appear before the Star Chamber. The fanatical and persecuting Archbishop asked him, "If he had dared to administer the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper?" Lamb pleaded the right of an Englishman not to bear witness against himself, and refused to answer. He was rudely ordered back to prison during the pleasure of the Court, and for some months remained in custody. His devoted wife besieged the Court with her prayers for her husband's liberation, not merely for her own sake, but for the sake of her eight young children. "Take that troublesome woman away!" shrieked out the Archbishop to the court officers; and Mrs. Lamb was forcibly ejected from the Star Chamber. It is not known by what means he regained his liberty; but such was his zeal in his Master's service, that though he had been in all the gaols in and about London on account of his recusancy, he no sooner regained his liberty than he instantly returned to his pastoral and itinerating labours. He was wont to say, that no man was fit to preach Christ's Gospel who was not also ready to die for it the moment he had done. Animated by such quenchless zeal and fearless courage, he speedily gathered about him a Christian community,

which usually met in Bell Alley, Coleman-street, London. A flourishing church was already in existence at the beginning of the quarrel between King Charles and his Parliament. The congregation was large, and the yard of the chapel was not unfrequently crowded with eager listeners. The church became a missionary centre, and labourers went forth into Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and other counties. Conspicuous among these itinerating preachers was Henry Denne, formerly a clergyman at Pyrton, in Hertford, a man of great decision and courage, and very largely successful.

Soon after the ordinance against unlicensed preachers was enacted by Parliament, the Lord Mayor of London sent officers to arrest Lamb and his assistants. Their arrival at Bell Alley Chapel was the signal for a great tumult, and provoked, in their hearing, some not very complimentary language. When Mr. Lamb had succeeded in repressing the agitation of his friends, he spoke courteously to the officers, asked permission to continue the service, and pledged his word that at six o'clock the same evening he himself and the young preacher, whose discourse they had interrupted, should both appear before the Lord Mayor. The officers then retired, and the service proceeded. Punctually to the time both Mr. Lamb and his young helpfellow made their appearance. The Lord Mayor began by calling their attention to the recent ordinance of Parliament. He then asked the young man, "Why do you preach? and where is your warrant?" "The Lord hath opened my mouth," he replied, "and I must show forth His praise." The Lord Mayor suggested that he might do this by a right discharge of his duties as a private Christian." *Lord Mayor*—"How long have you been a preacher?" *Mr. Lamb's Assistant*—"Ever since I was baptized." *Lord Mayor* (whose thoughts were running on infant baptism)—"Hath your mouth been open ever since your infancy?" *Mr. Lamb's Assistant*—"My infant baptism was no baptism. I have not been baptized more than six months."

It was now Mr. Lamb's turn to be questioned. "Have you not transgressed an ordinance of Parliament?" asked the Lord Mayor. "No," said Lamb, quoting the precise words of the Ordinance itself, "I am a preacher called and chosen by as *reformed* a church as any in the world." On further inquiry, Mr. Lamb frankly acknowledged that he and his friends did not regard infant baptism as valid. The two men were bound over to appear before a Committee of Parliament. A brief hearing before that Committee decided their case, and both were hurried off to prison. They were afterwards released by the intercession of powerful friends, and again returned with fresh zeal and boldness to their work.

It was during the time immediately following his release, that Thomas Lamb baptized the wife of a man who was a bitter enemy of the Baptists. The ordinance was administered in the Old Ford river, near Bromley, a spot commonly selected for that purpose by Thomas Lamb and his friends. The husband was among the crowd of spectators, hiding under his coat a heavy stone, which he intended to throw at Mr. Lamb whilst he was standing in the river, ready to administer the rite of baptism. But the fervent prayer of the preacher touched his heart, the stone was permitted to slide noiselessly to the ground, and tears filled the eyes of the softened and penitent husband: he was himself the next person baptized by Mr. Lamb in the Old Ford river.

Paul Hobson was another victim. He was a zealous Baptist; had helped to found a Baptist Church in London; signed the *Confession of the Seven Churches* in 1644; and in 1645 entered the army. He still retained his zeal, and "wherever he came, would preach publicly in the pulpits, and privately to the soldiers." He is regarded as the founder of several Baptist Churches in the West of England. Hobson, now Captain Hobson, was taken into custody, by the Governor of Newport Pagnell, for preaching against infant baptism. After being

kept there a prisoner for a short time, Sir Samuel Lake, the governor (the original of Butler's *Hudibras*, and with whom Butler resided during the interregnum), sent him to London. His case was brought before the Committee of Examination, and having some powerful friends, upon being heard, he was discharged. Edwards says that Hobson afterwards preached regularly every Wednesday in Chequer Alley, Finsbury Fields.

The following May (1645), the Lord Mayor of London, the Court of Aldermen, and the Common Council, presented a petition to Parliament, praying "that some strict and speedy course might be taken for suppressing all private and separate congregations; that all Anabaptists, Brownists, heretics and schismatics, blasphemers, and all other sectaries, who conformed not to the public discipline established, or to be established by Parliament, may be fully declared against, and some effectual course settled for proceeding against such persons; and that no person disaffected to Presbyterian government set forth, or to be set forth, by Parliament, may be employed in any place of public trust." This intolerant and infamous request is commonly known as *the City Remonstrance*. The appeal of the Lord Mayor and his colleagues was backed by the whole Scottish nation, and all the Presbyterians in England. A month after its presentation, the General Assembly, in moving a vote of thanks to the London civic authorities and their companions, commends them for their courage and their firm adherence to the Covenant, and beseeches them to go on boldly in their work until the three kingdoms were united in one faith and worship.

Some of the Presbyterians in Lancashire far outstripped the Lord Mayor and his colleagues in the vehemence with which they expressed their hatred of toleration. They, however, claimed for their paper this title, *The Harmonious Consent of the Lancashire ministers with their brethren in London*. One passage will give a taste of the whole: "Toleration would be putting a sword into a madman's hand; a cup of poison into

the hand of a child; a letting loose of madmen with firebrands in their hand, and appointing a city of refuge in men's consciences for the devil to fly to; a laying a stumbling-block before the blind; a proclaiming liberty to the wolves to come into Christ's fold to prey upon the lambs; neither would it provide for tender consciences, but take away all conscience."

Nothing loth to yield to this pressure, the Presbyterian Parliament passed "A declaration against all such persons as shall take upon them to preach or expound the Scriptures in any church or chapel, or any other publique place, except they be ordained either here or in some other Reformed Church." The "Declaration was also ordered to be forthwith printed and published; and that the knights and burgesses of the several counties and places do send some of the said declarations so printed, in the several counties and places for which they serve, to be there published." The Declaration is as follows:—"The Commons assembled in Parliament do declare, That they do dislike, and will proceed against all such persons as shall take upon them to preach, or expound the Scriptures in any church or chappel, or any other publique place (except they be ordained either here or in some other Reformed Church, as it is already prohibited in an Order of both Houses of 26 April, 1645). And likewise against all such Ministers or others, as shall publish, or maintain by Preaching, Writing, Printing, or any other way, anything against or in derogation of the Church Government, which is now established by the authority of both Houses of Parliament. And also against all and every person or persons, who shall willingly and purposely interrupt and disturb a Preacher who is in the publique exercise of his function. And all Justices of Peace, Sheriffs, Mayors, Bailiffs, and other Head Officers of Corporations, and all Officers of the Army, are to take notice of this Declaration; and by all lawful ways and means to prevent offences of this kind, and to apprehend all offenders, and give notice hereof unto this House, that there-

upon course may bee speedily taken for a due punishment to bee inflicted upon them."

When such were the opinions of Presbyterians, it is no wonder that Baptists, ever the persistent advocates for liberty of conscience,—the fullest, freest, and broadest,—should be the special victims of Presbyterian intolerance.

We take the following curious illustration from the account left by Edwards. John Sims, a Baptist minister, residing at Southampton, being on a journey to Taunton, in Somerset, was prevailed upon to preach in a parish church. He was apprehended at Bridgwater, by virtue of the "Declaration." The Committee of the County finding some letters upon him written to friends on religious subjects, forwarded them to London, as the ground of their complaint against Mr. Sims. For some cause or other not explained, the Government did not at once "silence" Mr. Sims; and Edwards, therefore, published these letters, with his own charges against him. The letters are innocent either of heresy or rebellion; but the "crimes" of which Mr. Sims was guilty were, in Edwards's estimation, of the blackest kind: (1) "Denying infant baptism;" and (2) "*presuming to take a text, and preaching before two Presbyterian ministers.*" These are Edwards's own words: "Sunday, the last of May, he (Sims) preached in the parish church of Middlesey; took his text out of Col. iii. 1, before one Master Mercer, and Master Esquier, ministers, with a hundred more persons; and being desired to know how he durst presume to teach so publicly, being not called, and an Ordinance of the Parliament to the contrary, answered: 'If Peter was called, so was he.' (2) Being desired to know why he taught contrary to the law of God, and the laws of the land, he answered, 'Why are they suffered to teach in London so near the Parliament House?' and that he allowed of the Parliament, so far as they go with his doctrine. (3) Being desired to know whether he allowed of our baptism, he answered, 'No; that for his part he was baptized by one Master Sickelmoor, and his manner of

baptizing was, that the aforesaid Sickelmoor went first into the water, and he after him; so that he, for his part, would not allow of our baptism.' "

Hanserd Knollys was one of the last victims to this Presbyterian rancour. His account will best be given in his own words :—" The Committee for plundering ministers sent their warrant to the keeper of Ely House to apprehend me, and bring me in safe custody before them. They took me out of my house, carried me to Ely House, and there kept me prisoner several days, without any bail; and at last carried me before the Committee, who asked me several questions, to which I gave sober and direct answers. Amongst others, the chairman, Mr. White, asked me who gave me authority to preach. I told him the Lord Jesus Christ. He then asked me whether I was a minister. I answered that I was made a priest by the prelate of Peterborough; but I had renounced that ordination, and did here again renounce the same. They asked me by what authority I preached in Bow Church. I told them, after I had refused the desire of the churchwardens three times one day after another, their want of supply and earnestness prevailed with me, and I went thither. They opened the pulpit door, and I went up and preached from Isaiah lviii., and gave them such an account of that sermon (thirty ministers of the Assembly of Divines, so-called, being present), that they could not gainsay, but made me withdraw, and said nothing to me, nor could my jailor take any charge of me, for the Committee had called for him, and threatened to turn him out of his place for keeping me prisoner so many days. So I went away without any blame or paying my fees." Soon after this, Knollys was brought before another Committee, that of examination, on the score of causing great disturbance to ministers and people in Suffolk. "I was stoned out of the pulpit," says Knollys, "and prosecuted at a privy sessions, and fetched out of the country sixty miles to London, and was constrained to bring up four or five witnesses of good repute and credit, to prove and vindicate

myself from false accusation." A second time he satisfied the higher tribunal, and the following minute was entered upon the records of the House: "Ordered: that Mr. Kiffin and Mr. Knollys be permitted to preach in any part of Suffolk, at the petition of the Ipswich men."

But every Baptist minister was not equally fortunate. Knollys, probably, got more merciful treatment, owing to a declaration published by the Lords and Commons the year before, March 1647: "That as the Baptist opinion against infant baptism is only a difference about a circumstance of time in the administration of an ordinance; we hold it fit that men should be convinced by the Word of God with great gentleness and reason, and not beaten out of it by force and violence." The same year in which Knollys escaped so leniently, an ordinance of Parliament was published, one article of which ran thus: "Whosoever shall say that the baptism of infants is unlawful, or that such baptism is void, and that such persons ought to be baptized again, and in pursuance thereof shall baptize any person formerly baptized; or shall say the church government by Presbytery is anti-Christian or unlawful, shall, upon conviction by oath of two witnesses, or by his own confession, be ordered to renounce his said error in the public congregation of the parish where the offence was committed; in case of refusal, he shall be committed to prison until he shall find sureties that he will not publish or maintain the same error any more." The ordinance itself is a melancholy witness to the persecuting spirit of the Presbyterians of that day; and, no thanks to them, if it was never used as an engine of fierce and remorseless persecution.

The Commonwealth (1649—1660).

Three months after the King's death, Mr. Kiffin and other leading Baptists in London, received the thanks of the House of Commons for repudiating, in their petition, the opinions

advocated in a book entitled, *The Second Part of England's New Chains discovered.* The petitioners declared, in their address, that though this book had been read in some of their public assemblies, it was read without their consent. "Our meetings," say they, "are not at all to intermeddle with the ordering or altering of the civil government, but solely for the advancement of the Gospel." After their address had been read, they were called to the bar of the House, when the Speaker returned them this reply: "The House doth take notice of the good affection to the Parliament and public you have expressed both in this petition and other ways; that they have received satisfaction thereby, concerning your disclaiming of the pamphlet which gave such just offence to the Parliament; and also concerning your disposition to live peaceably and in submission to the civil magistrate, your expressions whereof they account very Christian and seasonable; that for yourselves and other Christians walking answerably to such professions as in this petition you make, *they do assure you of liberty and protection, so far as God shall enable them, in all things consistent with godliness, honesty, and civil peace;* and the House doth give you leave to print your petition."

The fruit of this "assurance of liberty and protection" soon began to appear. Baptist churches rapidly sprang into existence in all parts of the country. On the assumption by Cromwell of the style and title of Lord Protector, great indignation was felt by many Baptists in the army; but it would be unfair to regard the biting and sarcastic letter written by them to Cromwell as expressing the common opinions among Baptists. Envious and disappointed officers might declare, in their vexation, "Anabaptists are men that will not be shuffled out of their birthrights as free-born people of England;" but the addresses sent to the Lord Protector from the Baptists in Northumberland, Yorkshire, Derbyshire, London, and Dublin, to say nothing of the flattering account of him by Richardson,

which has been already quoted in an earlier portion of this book, show that the Baptists generally had no fear as to their protection and liberty. Nor were they disappointed. The Council, soon after Cromwell's installation, issued a State paper, containing some forty-two articles; and in the thirty-sixth it is declared, "that none shall be compelled to conform to the public religion by penalties and otherwise; but that endeavours be used to win them by sound doctrine, and the example of a good conversation." In the thirty-seventh it is further ordered, "that such as profess faith in God by Jesus Christ, though differing in judgment from the doctrine, worship, or discipline publicly held forth, shall not be restrained from, but shall be protected in, the profession of their faith and the exercise of their religion, so as they abuse not this liberty to the civil injury of others, and to the actual disturbance of public peace on their part; provided this liberty be not extended to Popery or Prelacy, or to such, under a profession of Christ, as hold forth and practice licentiousness." There is a further article which declares that all the penal laws, contrary to this liberty, shall be null and void. Cromwell's notions of toleration were not so broad as the Baptists, nor were all his officers disposed to carry out, where they could do it with impunity, the strict letter of the Council's articles. Grantham complains that, "in the time of Cromwell's usurpation, they did pull us before the judgment seats, because we could not worship God after the will of the Lord Protector, for so they styled him in the articles against us; and we had then our goods taken away, and never restored to this day." But these petty local persecutions were the exception, and not the rule, and were manifestly a violation of the articles of the Council. On the whole, the Commonwealth, dearly loved by many Baptists, was a time of comparative quiet and prosperity. But dark and dismal days were drawing near—days which Richardson had predicted, when those Baptists, who had once been so ready to find fault with Cromwell, "would weep for the want of him."

The Baptists suffered immensely during the reign of

Charles the Second (1660—1685).

His declaration from Breda, "that no man should be disquieted or called in question for differences of opinion in matters of religion which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom,"—proved to be worthless. The Baptists, and indeed all Dissenters, were "scattered and peeled." The Restoration was scarcely in sight, before the Baptists began to have warning of what would speedily follow. Several London chapels were destroyed by Royalist mobs, and their congregations dispersed. A very whirlwind of persecution burst upon the Baptists. Venner's rebellion was made the occasion of fresh severities, although the Baptists in London, speaking on behalf of their brethren generally, washed their hands of all participation in it. "We should be stupid and senseless, if we did not deeply resent these black obloquies and reproaches," say they, "cast upon those of our profession and practice in the point of baptism, by occasion of the late most horrible treason and rebellion in this City of London. . . . We protest that we neither had the least foreknowledge of the said late treasonable insurrection, nor did we any of us, in any kind and degree whatever, directly or indirectly, contrive, promote, assist, abet or approve the same; but do esteem it our duty to God, and to his majesty, and to our neighbour, not only to be obedient, but also to use our utmost industry to prevent all such treasons, murders, and rebellions." They protest against being confounded with the Anabaptists of Munster, because they happen to be known by the same name. They quote their own Confession of Faith to show their respect for magistrates; and earnestly plead that they may be permitted "to worship God in peace and freedom." All was in vain. Blow after blow was dealt upon them by the unscrupulous men who were now in power. Jails soon became choked with prisoners, sixty men often being crammed into a room nine feet by fourteen!

Some died of the rough usage received from the soldiers and constables when seized at their meeting-houses; others perished from the fœtid and poisoned air of their prisons. "On the 15th June, 1662, the soldiers came with rage and fury, with their swords drawn," to a meeting of the Baptists in Petty France and London. A mere lad was cruelly wounded,—"almost to death, so that it was doubtful whether he would recover." The minister was carried off to Newgate, and there remained a close prisoner. Less than a fortnight afterwards, the soldiers again visited this chapel, with drawn swords. "They wounded some, and struck others. They broke down the gallery and made great spoil." At a second meeting-house they broke open the cupboard, and drank up the wine provided for the Lord's Supper. At a third, finding the congregation was dispersed before they arrived, the soldiers egged on the mob that followed at their heels to gut the chapel. This was only a sample of the usage the Baptists received in all parts of the country. They were robbed and insulted in the open streets, were heavily fined, were pilloried, were dragged by soldiers out of bed at night, were cast headlong down winding stairs. Everywhere the same coarse brutality marked the conduct of the persecutors.

Often driven forth from their humble meeting-houses, the Baptists met wherever shelter or secrecy could be obtained; in out-of-the-way barns, in malt-houses, in hay-lofts, in woods, in sheltered lanes. All manner of contrivances were adopted to elude the infamous spies, called informers, who were now doing a profitable trade. At Reading the Baptists met in a humble house in Prince's-lane, near a branch of the river Kennet. A door opened behind the house upon a rude bridge hastily thrown across the stream, and over this the preacher escaped when the alarm was given. At Newport Pagnell their meeting-place was a barn, from which they could escape down a back lane, when the approach of informers was signalled. At Bendish, near Hitchin, they met in a low, thatched malt-house. The high

pew in front of the pulpit hid the ministers from the informers, and gave them time to flee out from a door near at hand. In other places the pulpit communicated with the yard behind, and so permitted the preacher to get a few minutes' start of his pursuers. At Wallingford, however, Mr. Stennet secured the means of uninterrupted worship for some time by a novel expedient. "He dwelt in the castle of Wallingford, a place where no warrant could make forcible entrance but that of a Lord Chief Justice; and the house was so situated, that the assemblies could meet, and every part of religious worship be exercised in it, without any danger of a legal conviction, unless informers were admitted, which care was taken to prevent; so that for a long time he kept a constant and undisturbed meeting in his hall." An attempt to obtain a conviction by suborned witnesses signally failed, through an unexpected chapter of accidents. The chief instigator, at the time of the trial, was chasing after a prodigal son, who had eloped from Oxford with an actress; the clergyman, who was to be his right-hand man, died suddenly; and out of the eight witnesses, only one could be found on the day of the trial, and he refused to appear. The case was, therefore, dismissed.

Even bishops were not ashamed to play the part of spies. Many were contented to encourage the informers secretly, and throw the odium on the civil magistrates; but Dr. Peter Gunning, the Bishop of Chichester, marched in person, at the head of a *posse* of constables, to disperse the assemblies of the schismatics. If he found the doors closed, he gave orders that they should be broken open with sledge-hammers. On seeing this done, a wag in the crowd once exclaimed, "What! has *Peter* lost his keys?" The clergy, the magistrates, the nobles, all joined with the mob in insulting and defaming the Baptists. Informers were feed by Oxford Chancellors, and protected by justices of the peace. One of these wretches first passed himself off as a Quaker, but letting fall over his cups, that he was an informer, he found it prudent to escape. He next appears

as a Baptist; and to prove his contempt of infant-baptism, he actually christened a cat Catherine-Catherina. Some simple-minded people were gulled by this infamous creature, among whom was Mr. Headach, a man of good repute. But for the disclosures against the informer's character, made at the very time Mr. Headach was on his trial for "treasonable words" which this informer had declared Mr. Headach had spoken, Mr. Headach would have been heavily fined, or perhaps have lost his life. The country people, not knowing this informer's name, called him *Trepan*. His real name was John Poulter. He was the son of a butcher at Salisbury. So savage and relentless were the informers in Devon also, that they were commonly known, in that county, as *the bloodhounds*.

A story is recorded of one good minister's out-witting an informer. George Hammon, a devoted and zealous General Baptist minister in Kent, whilst residing at Canterbury, was going to preach at some distant place, and was overtaken by a violent storm. As he stood under a tree for shelter, a man from the house opposite called to him, told him he was an informer, and having heard there was to be preaching in such a place that night, he was going thither in order to give information of the persons assembled. This was the very place where Mr. Hammon was himself appointed to preach. He instantly replied, "I am a man-taker also." "Are you?" said the informer; "then let us go together." When they came to the house, after sitting some time, Mr. Hammon said to the informer, "Here are the people! but where is the minister? Unless there is a minister, we cannot make a conventicle of it; and, therefore, I propose that either you or I should preach." The informer, of course, declined. "Then," said Hammon, "I must." He discoursed, with so much energy and point, to the utter surprise of the informer, that from that night the informer gave up his hateful calling, and became an altered man.

Every county in England has its own story to tell of the

persecutions of this period. But one case will illustrate a score. John Miller, of Minthenton, Dorset, had come of Presbyterian parents, but had embraced Baptist opinions. He gathered a church, and became an active itinerant preacher. For ten years he lay in prison for his recusancy, and hardly escaped a *præmunire*. At the close of the reign of Charles the Second, his goods were seized, and he himself imprisoned. Like John Bunyan, he was charged with "devilishly and perniciously abstaining from coming to church" for eleven months. At the Assizes at Sherbourn only one witness could be found against him, and it was found difficult to prove the charge until a neighbouring justice, one of the King's poor knights, turned evidence. Miller was fined the full penalty, according to the Conventicle Act, of twenty pounds a month, that is,—two hundred and twenty pounds. He objected to the sentence as illegal, but was told by the judge that he might seek his remedy elsewhere. As Mr. Miller declined to pay the fine, the sheriff seized all his property: four hundred sheep, twenty cows, seven horses, seven fattening pigs, all the hay, corn, and wool of last year's produce, and the malt and hops reserved for the family. For four months the sheriff's men levied their exactions. Mr. Miller remained in doors, since the prosecutor threatened to imprison him again. His eldest son, by merely taking an inventory of what was seized, so incensed the legalised plunderers, that a warrant was issued to apprehend him, and he was compelled to fly. At length, two neighbours, one of them a benevolent Churchman, seeing the havoc they were making of Mr. Miller's property, paid the fine, and dismissed the sheriff's officers. During this period they had wasted or seized goods to the amount of five hundred pounds. Miller, meanwhile, ventured to London, and laid a petition before the King, not asking for the restoration of what had been destroyed, but only that the little of his corn that remained might be spared for the wants of his wife and eight children, the rapacious bailiffs refusing them provisions unless they paid for them. He might

have saved himself his journey. The debauched voluptuary listened with undisguised indifference to the story of his wrongs, and only deigned to reply—"*I have nothing to say to you. You must go home, and conform!*" This was just the last thing Mr. Miller would do. He found there would be no more peace for him in Dorset; he sold his estate, retired to a lonely farm in a region where he was unknown; and there, with straightened income, lived on undisturbed until some years after the Revolution.

Plots, false charges, forged letters,—all manner of mean and despotic devices,—were vamped up to justify the prosecution of Baptists. Kiffin suffered imprisonment for the last; John James was hanged on Tyburn for the first. But enough. The story of the wrongs endured by the Baptists, during the days of Charles the Second, remains yet to be written. The Lincolnshire General Baptists complained to the King, at the very commencement of his reign: "We are abused as we pass along the streets, and as we sit in our houses. We are threatened to be hanged if heard praying to the Lord in our families, and disturbed in our so waiting upon God by an uncivil beating at our doors, and sounding of horns; yea, we have been stoned when going to our meetings, the windows of the places where we have met struck down with stones; yea, also taken as evil-doers, and imprisoned when peaceably met to worship the Most High in the use of His precious ordinances." These proved only the beginning of sorrows, not in Lincoln alone, but in every part of the island.

James the Second (1685—1688).

For the first few months after the King ascended the throne, persecution still darkened the land. Justices and clergy were as busy as ever; Spiritual Courts continued their mockery; bishops were persistent in their "injunctions" to their clergy and churchwardens to look up absentees from the parish churches; and the King was taking hasty strides toward

absolute power. All the judges but one gave it as their opinion—"(1) That the laws of England were the King's laws; (2) that it was an inseparable branch of the prerogative of the Kings of England, as of other sovereigns, to dispense all the penal laws on particular occasions; (3) that of these reasons and cases the King is the sole judge; and (4) that this is not a trust now invested in and granted to the present King, but the ancient remains of the sovereign power of the Kings of England, which was never yet taken from them, nor can be!" Thus the whole body of laws in England was at once put into the hands of the King.

A little before this time, the meeting-place of the Baptist church at Luppit, Devon, was discovered, and the congregation scattered. Presently afterward they met again at a farm-house in a wood, about a mile and a half from Upottery, where the chapel is now situated. Again they were surprised. Some were apprehended, and transported to Jamaica for seven years, and the rest escaped. On the sudden favour shown by King James to Nonconformists, the remnant re-assembled, and resolved to build a place of worship. Half a century ago there still existed, behind the farm-house, the dam in which the midnight baptisms were administered.

One singular instance of the licences or Dispensations now granted to Dissenters, is worth repeating, with the licence itself. The Baptists at Abingdon, near Oxford, had been so harassed by informers, and mulcted in fines by justices, and persecuted in other ways, that they were compelled to close their chapel. The pastor at this time was Henry Forty. He and seven others were indicted at the assizes for absenting themselves from church, while others of their number were cited to appear in the Spiritual Courts for not receiving the Sacrament at Easter. Their trial came on in July, 1686, before Mr. Justice Holloway, and Mr. Justice Luwick. The Recorder, Mr. Finmore, greatly exaggerated their offences, and their enemies felt certain of convicting them. They had, themselves,

looked for no mercy; and in telling Mr. Medlecot their case, suggested that he should obtain them a Dispensation from the King. Two Justices of the Peace signed their appeal, and the Dispensation was obtained. When Mr. Medlecot stood up in the Assize Court on their behalf, he was asked the formal question, "Are you retained for these people?" "Yes," said Mr. Medlecot. Judge Holloway being on the bench, answered, "We thought so," greeting him at the same time with a malicious scowl. Mr. Medlecot replied, "Your lordship has served them more effectually than I." At this, Judge Holloway was greatly indignant. Still the attorney went on,—"And they give you the greater thanks; for your lordship, and my lords the judges, have declared his Majesty a sovereign prince; that the laws are his laws; that he might dispense with them when necessary; that he was judge of that necessity; and he has thought it necessary in the case of these defendants." Mr. Medlecot then produced in Court the patent under the broad seal. The effect was electrical. Most of those present were filled with consternation. Their colour came and went; they hung down their heads in shame and vexation. There was, however, but one course open to the judges—they discharged the prisoners. This was on Saturday, July 10, 1686. The very same evening the old meeting-house was cleaned and prepared for worship; and the following day, both morning and evening, hundreds assembled in it quietly, and without molestation.

The patent, or Dispensation, which extended to twenty-five persons and their families, cost some six-and-twenty pounds. It ran as follows:—

"We, whose names are hereunto subscribed, do certify that Henry Forty, &c., &c., &c., to the best of our knowledge have demeaned and behaved themselves peaceably and quietly towards his late majesty, Charles the Second, and his present majesty, King James, and their governments.

"Given under our hands and seals this — day of July, 1686, by two justices of the peace in the County of Berks.

"Granted thereupon.

"James R. Rex: Whereas, our most dear brother, the late King deceased, had signified his intention to his Attorney-General for the pardoning such of his subjects who had been sufferers in the late times of usurpation and rebellion for their royalty; and whose parents and relatives had been sufferers for the same cause, or who had themselves testified their loyalty and affection for the government; and were presented, indicted, and convicted, for not taking, or refusing to take, the oath of allegiance or supremacy, or one of them; or had been prosecuted by the Prerogative Writ, called the Long Writ of the Exchequer, for the penalty of twenty pounds *per mensem;* or upon outlawries or writs, de Excom. cap., or other processes of the causes aforesaid; or for not coming to church; or receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper according to the usage of the Church of England, or by reason of their convictions of recusancy or exercise of their religion; or who were otherwise prosecuted as recusants, or imprisoned for any of the crimes aforesaid; and for the doing thereof our said brother in divers counties had given orders. Now, in pursuance of these gracious intentions of our said most dear brother, and for that the persons hereunto annexed have produced unto us, certificates of their services and sufferings of themselves, their parents, and nearest relations; our will and pleasure therefore is, that the persons mentioned in the said schedule, their wives, and families, and servants, shall not in any sort be prosecuted or molested for any of the causes above-mentioned. Wherefore we recommend and direct you, every one of you in your respective places, to forbear all prosecution against the said persons, their wives, families, and servants, and every of them; and that you cause all processes and proceedings whatsoever so commenced and issued, or to be commenced and issued, against such persons, their wives, families, and servants, and every of them, for the causes aforesaid, to be wholly superseded, discharged, and stayed; and they and every one of them absolutely dis-

charged and set at liberty until our royal will and pleasure be further known and signified unto you respectively. And for doing these, and for the entry and enrolment thereof with you respectively, shall be unto you and every one of you respectively a sufficient warrant.

"Given at our Court at Windsor, the 7th July, in the second year of our reign, 1686.

"SUNDERLAND,

"By his Majesty's command.

"To all archbishops and bishops, their chancellors and commissaries; and to all archdeacons and their officials, and all others exercising any ecclesiastical jurisdiction; and to our judges, and justices of assize, of gaol delivery, justices of the peace, sheriffs, mayors, bailiffs, and all other persons whom it may in any wise concern."

The persecutions against Dissenters still went on, and many were driven from the country. Meanwhile the King continued to grant his Dispensations. In April, 1687, the King published a Declaration of Toleration, and protested that it was in his heart to have done it sooner if he had not been restrained by the bishops. Fulsome addresses now went up to the King. The long hidden Baptists crept out of their hiding-places, and once more assembled in their chapels as of yore. The King further sought to gain favour with Dissenters, and offered to make Kiffin an alderman; with what result we are all familiar. Not long after these transactions James fled to France, and in his flight threw the great seal into the Thames. A brighter era was approaching—the era which will ever be memorable to English Dissenters. William of Orange landed in Torbay in 1688, and in the following year the Toleration Act was passed, which secured to all Dissenters the right of unmolested public worship.

CHAPTER VI.

BAPTIST CONFESSIONS OF FAITH.

THE Confessions published by the Baptists in the Seventeenth Century were neither creeds written to secure uniformity of belief, nor articles to which subscription was demanded. They were rather expositions of their opinions, issued in this particular form, as being most convenient. They were defences, or Apologies (in the original sense of that term), wrung from them by the shameless calumnies and bitter misrepresentations of their enemies.

The rapid growth of Baptists in the early part of the Seventeenth Century aroused against them a host of adversaries. Every weapon—slander, perversion, abuse, no matter what—all was considered fair in their warfare. No heresy was too gross, no practice too abominable, for the Baptists; at least so affirmed a hundred voices. "I expect some of them will say, with John of Leyden," says one of their adversaries, "that if the Word of God were lost, they might soon supply another.... That the regenerated man cannot sin is the very doctrine of the Anabaptists; to take the communion where there is a profane person, is to take it with his profaneness; that the Lord's Prayer was never taught to be said, &c.; that a liberty of prophesying must be allowed; that distinctions of parishes is anti-Christian; that ministers of God's Word should rule both the spiritual and the temporal; that all human laws must be

abolished, and all policies of states must be taken out of God's word only :—all these are scions of that stock of Anabaptism that was transplanted out of Holland in the year 1535, when two ships laden with Anabaptists fled into England, after they had missed the enterprise at Amsterdam.

"To these doctrines you must add their practices. The seditious pamphlets; the tumultuous rising of rude multitudes, threatening blood and destruction; the preaching of the cobblers, felt-makers, grooms, and women; the choosing of any place for God's service but the church; the night meetings of naked men and women; the licentiousness of spiritual marriages without any legal form: these things, if they be not looked into, will bring us in time to community of wives, community of goods, and destruction of all."

Another writer declares that "in one Anabaptist you have many heretics; and in this one sect, as it were one stock, many erroneous and schismatical positions and practices engrafted and, as it were, inoculated. . . . They preach, and print, and practice their heretical impieties openly. They hold their conventicles weekly in our chief cities, and suburbs thereof, and there prophesy by turns. . . . They flock in great multitudes to their Jordans, and both sexes enter the river, and are dipt after their manner with a kind of spell, concerning their tenets. . . . They print not only Anabaptism, from whence they take their name, but many other most damnable doctrines, tending to carnal liberty, familism, and a medley and hodge-podge of all religions. . . . If this sect prevail, we shall have no monarchy in the State, nor hierarchy in the Church, but anarchy in both. . . . Solinas writeth, that in Sardinia whence there is a venomous serpent called Solifuga (whose biting is present death), there is also at hand a fountain, in which, who washes themselves after they are bit, are presently cured. This venomous serpent, flying from and shunning the light of God's Word, is the Anabaptist, who in these later times first showed his shining head and speckled skin, and thrust out his sting near the place of my

residence for more than twenty years." They are "adders, and efts, breed in old broken walls." They are "illiterate," "sottish," "lying," "blasphemous," "impure," "carnal," "cruel," "bloody," "profane," "sacrilegious." So wrote Dr. Featley, of Southwark. But if Featley is virulent, and Edwards savage and unscrupulous, Baillie is little better than either. "The spirit of the Anabaptists is clearly devilish," says Baillie; "every Anabaptist is a rigid Separatist; will put all Church power in the hands of the people; will permit any gifted man to preach, but not in a steeple-house; tithes are unlawful; their preachers work with their own hands, and do not go in black clothes; they celebrate the Lord's Supper in inns; they deny all power to the magistrates in anything that concerns religion;" and, most grievous sin of all, in the estimation of a North Briton—"*they are injurious to the Scots.*"

When such were the gross calumnies and silly nonsense mixed up and offered to men as "Baptist opinions and Baptist practices," it was surely needful that Baptists themselves should make their own declaration.

Smyth's Confession

is, perhaps, the first Baptist creed, or Apology, of modern times. Dr. Evans has given the whole of the articles, one hundred and two in number, in the Appendix to his first volume on *Early English Baptists*. It is a translation from a Dutch copy, preserved in the archives of the church at Amsterdam, and was evidently written to confute the opinions ascribed to Smyth and his party by Robinson and the Brownists of Amsterdam. It was first published in 1611.

In this *Confession*, after stating that there is a God, "one in number," "incomprehensible and inexpressible," whose "essence" is not explained in the Scriptures, but only "His working and attributes," the terms Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, declaring to us what we can know of Him, Smyth says, (Article 7): "To understand and conceive God in the mind, or

in the understanding, is not the saving knowledge of God; but to be like God in His effects and properties; to be made conformable to His divine and heavenly attributes." God, also, "foresaw and determined the issue and event of His works . . .;" and it is therefore "an abomination" to speak of "all things happening by luck and fortune." Yet "God is not the author and worker of sin and wickedness; that He only has foreseen and determined what evil the free-will of angels and men would do; yet He gave no influence, instinct, motion, or inclination to the least sin." "God created man with a free will, having the faculty to choose what is good, and to avoid what is evil; or to choose evil, and avoid what is good; and that this will was a natural power and property, created by God in the soul of man." The fall of Adam did not destroy "any natural power or faculty;" "and therefore, being fallen, he still retained freedom of will." Smyth objects to the use of the term "original sin" as unscriptural;" nor "is there such a thing as men intended by the word (Jer. xviii. 8); because as God threatened death only to Adam, not to his posterity for their sins, and because God over-rates the soul." Even "if original sin" might have passed from Adam to his posterity, "yet is the issue thereof stayed by the death of Christ, which was effectual, before Cain and Abel's birth, as Christ is the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world (Rom. xiii. 8)." "Infants," says the twentieth article, "are conceived and born in innocency, without sin, and that they dying, therefore, are all undoubtedly saved; which is to be understood of all infants who live in the world; for the sin is not imputed; because where there is no law, there is no transgression. Now the law was not given to infants, but to them that could understand."

The distinctive sentiments of the early General Baptists are thus affirmed in articles twenty-two to twenty-six:—"Adam, being fallen, God did not hate him, but loved him still, and sought his welfare with all his heart; neither doth He hate any man that falleth with Adam; but He loves mankind, and from

His love, sent His only-begotten Son to save that which was lost, and to find that which was gone astray." "That God never forsaketh a man till there be no remedy; neither doth He cast away His innocent creature from all eternity, but casteth away irrecoverably in sin [literally, 'who will not be aided']; " "but as there is in all creatures an inclination to their young, to do them good, so is in the Lord an inclination towards men to promote their welfare; *for each spark of godliness that is in the creatures, is also infinitely in God;*" "that God has determined, before the foundation of the world, that the way of life and salvation should be by Christ; and that He has foreseen who would follow it, and also who would follow the way of infidelity and impenitency;" "that no more than a father begets his child to the gallows, and a potter forms a pot to be broken, so God predestinates and creates nobody to damnation (Ezek. xxxiii. 11; Gen. i. 17; 1 Cor. xv. 49; Gen. v. 3);" "that the sacrifice," says the thirty-third article, "of Christ's body and blood, offered unto God His Father, upon the cross, though a sacrifice of a sweet smell, and though God be well pleased with Him, doth not reconcile God to us, who did never hate us, nor was our enemy; but reconcileth us to God, and slayeth the enmity and hatred which is in us against God."

It will be seen, from the sixty-third and sixty-fourth articles, how easily men might run away with the notion, who only heard half Smyth's and the other Anabaptist's statements, "That if the Word were lost, they could soon supply men with another." Smyth says, "That the new creature which is born of God, needs not the outward Scripture, creature, or ordinances of the external churches, so that it might bear itself on it for support; because it hath three witnesses in itself, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, which are better than all Scripture, creatures, ordinances, whatever they may be;" "that even as He who was above the law, nevertheless is made under the law for our sakes, so the regenerated can and will not do other thing, from love toward their"—["Master,"

we suppose, although there is here an obscure and unrendered part of the MS.]—"than to employ the external things that therewith they may come to aid and support of men; *that, therefore, the visible Church and ordinances are at all times necessary for all men, whatever they be.*" But surely this is a very different statement from John of Leyden's; and nothing but a determination to caricature the words of an opponent can ever make them teach his doctrine.

The broad catholicity of Smyth startled the narrow souls of many good men, who yet believed the Scriptures. "All repenting and believing Christians are," says the seventy-second article, "brethren in the communion of the outward visible Church, wherever they may live, or by what name they may be named, be they Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Zwinglians, Calvinists, Brownists, Anabaptists, or any other pious Christians, who in truth, and by godly zeal, strive for repentance and faith, although they are implicated in great ignorance and weakness. Nevertheless, we greet them altogether with a holy kiss, deploring with our whole heart that we, who strive for one faith, one Spirit, one Lord, one God, one body, one baptism, should be so divided and severed into so many sects and splittings, and that for so less considerable reason."

In answer to the charge that Anabaptists deny all magistrates, Smyth writes (Article 85): "that the office of the magistrate is a permissive ordinance of God (Rom. xiii. 1), or an ordinance of man (1 Pet. ii. 13; 1 Sam. viii. 5, 22), which God has permitted, that one might not devour the other, as the wild beasts; so that honesty, decency, sobriety amongst men might be maintained, and that the magistrate thereby may please God in his vocation, doing what is right and just in the sight of the Lord, in order that they may obtain a temporal blessing from God for themselves, their families, and their subjects." The next article is the one previously quoted, wherein magistrates are taught "not to meddle with religion and matters of conscience." Smyth still regarded the dif-

ferences between members of the visible Church as matters to be settled between themselves, since "Christ's disciples," on such differences, "may not go to law before magistrates; and all their differences must be decided by yea and nay, peacefully, without using an oath."

The maintenance of the poor is taught in the ninety-second article: "That in the necessity of the Church and the poor brethren, all things ought to be common; nay, one church ought to assist another in its wants."

It is needless to quote Smyth's declaration concerning marriage, since it is expressed in the words of Scripture (Heb. xiii. 4; 1 Cor. vii. 2); "but," says Smyth, in another article towards the end of his long confession, "Christ's disciples, the members of the visible Church, ought not to marry wicked and impious people of the world; but every one must marry in the Lord (1 Cor. vii. 39, 40); that is, every man only one wife, and every woman only one man (1 Cor. vii. 2; Acts xiii.)."

Professor Müller, who kindly translated this confession for Dr. Evans, says:—"I have made the translations as faithful as possible, and as literal, as far as it could be done. The incorrectness of the style and the writing have caused much obscurity in many parts. I have occasionally altered a word, and in some instances transposed one, to make the meaning plainer. In no case is the sense altered. I have carefully avoided that. I wish I could have removed all obscurity from some of the articles; but that I found all but impossible." Enough, however, of clearness is to be found in all those articles which give this *Confession* its distinctive value; and both Professor Müller and Dr. Evans deserve well of the Baptists for having snatched this precious fragment from oblivion.

The London Confession.

The next "Confession of Faith" was published in 1644, and was reprinted in 1646. It is that which Luke Howard

describes as well known under the title of *The Faith of the Seven Churches*. As these churches were all situated in the metropolis, the best title for it is *The London Confession*.

Like Smyth's, the publication of this was mainly due to the misrepresentations of their enemies. From the pulpit, and from the press, nothing but opprobrious terms were hurled against the Baptists. In order, therefore, to clear themselves from the unjust aspersions of their foes, they determined upon the publication of this *Confession*. It consists of fifty-two articles, and is strictly Calvinistic. The churches subscribing to this *Confession* were Devonshire Square; Broad Street, Wapping; Great St. Helen's; Crutched Friars; Bishopsgate Street; Coleman Street; and Glazier's Hall. The original title was as follows: "*A Confession of Faith of seven congregations, or Churches of Christ in London*, which are commonly, but unjustly called, Anabaptists; published for the vindication of the truth, and information of the ignorant, likewise for the taking off those aspersions, which are frequently, both in pulpit and in print, unjustly cast upon them. Printed at London, anno 1646." The *Confession* is signed, among others, by John Spilsbury, Samuel Richardson, William Kiffin, Thomas Patient, and Hanserd Knollys.

After acknowledging that there is one God, whose subsistence is in Himself, whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself, "and that in this divine and infinite being there is the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, each having the whole Divine essence, yet the essence undivided," the third article runs as follows:—

"God hath decreed in Himself, before the world was, concerning all things, whether necessary, accidental, or voluntary, with the circumstances of them, to work, dispose, and bring about all things according to the counsel of His own will, to His glory (yet without being the author of sin, or having fellowship with any therein), in which appears His wisdom in disposing all things, unchangeableness, power, and faithfulness

in accomplishing His decree: and God hath before the foundation of the world, foreordained some men to eternal life, through Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of His grace, leaving the rest in their sin to their just condemnation, to the praise of His justice." The sixth article further states, that "the elect, being loved of God with an everlasting love, are redeemed, quickened, and saved, not by themselves, nor their own works, lest any man should boast, but only and wholly by God, of His free grace and mercy, through Jesus Christ, who is made unto us by God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and all in all, that he that rejoiceth may rejoice in the Lord." Again, in the twenty-first article, we read,—"Jesus Christ, by His death, did purchase salvation for the elect that God gave unto Him; these only have interest in Him, and fellowship with Him, for whom He makes intercession with His Father in their behalf; and to them alone doth God by His Spirit apply this redemption; as also the free gift of eternal life is given unto them, and none else."

Notwithstanding this, "the preaching of the Gospel," says article twenty-five, "to the conversion of sinners, is absolutely free, no way requiring as absolutely necessary, any qualifications, preparations, or terrors of the law, or preceding ministry of the law, but only and alone the naked soul, a sinner and the ungodly, to receive Christ crucified, dead, and buried, and raised again; who is made a prince and a Saviour for such sinners as through the Gospel shall be brought to believe in Him."

The thirty-sixth and two following articles point out that each church has power given it by Christ to choose among themselves "meet persons," for elders and deacons; that such ought to continue in their calling and place, according to God's ordinance, to feed the flock; and while they are not to do this for filthy lucre, is yet the duty of every church, "to supply freely" to them, "whatsoever they shall need, according to

Christ's ordinance, that they that preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel."

After describing the mode of baptism as being by "dipping or plunging the body under water," the person designed by Christ "to dispense baptism," we are told, "the Scripture holds forth to be a disciple; it being nowhere tied to a particular Church officer, or person extraordinarily sent."

The germ of Baptist Associations is found in the forty-seventh article:—"Although the particular congregations be distinct, and several bodies, every one as a compact and knit city within itself; yet they are all to walk by one rule of truth; so also are they, (by all means convenient), to have the counsel and help one of another, if necessity require it, as members of one body, in the common faith, under Christ their head."

Four articles touch on magistrates, and are as follows:—

"*Article* 48.—A civil magistracy is an ordinance of God, set up by Him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well; and that in all lawful things commanded by them, subjection ought to be given by us in the Lord, not only for wrath, but for conscience' sake; and that we are to make supplications and prayers for kings, and all that are in authority, that under them we may live a quiet and peaceable life, in godliness and all honesty."

To this article there is appended the following note:—

"The supreme magistracy of this kingdom we acknowledge to be the King and Parliament (now established) freely chosen by this kingdom; and that we are to maintain and defend all civil laws and civil officers made by them, which are for the good of the Commonwealth. And we acknowledge with thankfulness that God hath made this present King and Parliament honourable, in throwing down the prelatical hierarchy, because of their tyranny and oppression over us, under which this kingdom long groaned, for which we are ever engaged to bless God and honour them for the same. And concerning the worship of God, there is but one Lawgiver

which is able to save and destroy (James iv. 12), which is Jesus Christ, who hath given laws and rules sufficient in His Word for His worship; and for any to make more, were to charge Christ with want of wisdom, or faithfulness, or both, in not making laws enough, or not good enough for His house. Surely it is our wisdom, duty, and privilege, to observe Christ's laws only (Ps. ii. 6, 9, 10, 12). So *it is the magistrate's duty to tender the liberty of men's consciences* (Ecc. viii. 8), (*which is the tenderest thing unto all conscientious men, and most dear unto them, and without which all other liberties will not be worth the naming, much less enjoying*), and to protect all under them from all wrong, injury, oppression, and molestation; so it is our duty not to be wanting in nothing which is for their honour and comfort, and whatsoever is for the well-being of the commonwealth under which we live; it is our duty to do, and we believe it to be our express duty, especially in matters of religion, to be fully persuaded in our minds of the lawfulness of what we do, as knowing whatsoever is not of faith is sin. And as we cannot do anything contrary to our understandings and consciences, so neither can we forbear the doing of that which our understandings and consciences bind us to do. And if the magistrate should require us to do otherwise, we are to yield our persons in a passive way to their power, as the saints of old have done (James v. 4). And thrice happy shall he be, that shall lose his life for witnessing (though but for the least tittle) of the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Pet. v.; Gal. v.)"

"*Article* 49.—But in case we find not the magistrate to favour us herein; yet we dare not suspend our practice, because we believe we ought to go in obedience to Christ, in professing the faith once delivered to the saints, which faith is declared in the Holy Scriptures, and this our confession of faith a part of them; and that we are to witness to the truth of the Old and New Testament to the death, if necessity require, in the midst of all trials and afflictions, as the saints of old have done; not accounting our goods, lands, wives, children, fathers, mothers,

brethren, sisters, yea, and our own lives dear unto us, so we may finish our course with joy; remembering always, that we ought to obey God rather than men, Who will, when we have finished our course, and kept the faith, give us the crown of righteousness; to Whom we must give an account of all our actions, and no man being able to discharge us of the same."

"*Article* 50.—It is lawful for a Christian to be a magistrate or civil officer; and also it is lawful to take an oath, so it be in truth, and in judgment, and in righteousness, for confirmation of truth, and ending of all strife; and that by rash and vain oaths the Lord is provoked, and this land mourns."

"*Article* 51.—We are to give unto all men whatsoever is their due, as their place, age, estate, requires; and that we defraud no man of anything, but to do unto all men as we would they should do unto us."

After this clear statement of their opinions on the subject of obedience to magistrates, oaths, &c., the *London Confession* closes with the following note:—

"Thus we desire to give unto Christ that which is His, and unto all lawful authority that which is their due, and to owe nothing to any man but love; to live quietly and peaceably, as it becometh saints, endeavouring in all things to keep a good conscience, and to do unto every man (of what judgment soever) as we would they should do unto us; that as our practice is, so it may prove us to be a conscionable, quiet, and harmless people (noways dangerous and troublesome to human society), and to labour and work with our hands, that we may not be chargeable to any, but to give to him that needeth, both friends and enemies, accounting it more excellent to give than to receive. Also we confess that we know but in part, and that we are ignorant of many things which we desire and seek to know; and if any shall do us that friendly part to show us, from the Word of God, that we see not, we shall have cause to be thankful to God and them. *But if any man shall impose upon us anything that we see not commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ,*

we should, in His strength, rather embrace all reproaches and tortures of men, to be stripped of all outward comforts, and if it were possible, to die a thousand deaths, rather than to do anything against the least tittle of the Word of God, or against the light of our own consciences. And if any shall call what we have said heresy, then do we, with the Apostle, acknowledge, that after the way they call heresy worship we the God of our fathers, disclaiming all heresies (rightly so-called, because they are against Christ); and to be steadfastly immovable, always abounding in obedience to Christ, as knowing that our own labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

It was hardly to be expected that the men who had so virulently abused the Baptists would permit this *Confession*, closing with these noble words, to pass unchallenged. Featley, who had been their most bitter defamer, felt a little abashed before its clear and unanswerable statements, and in his *Censure*, printed shortly after, is constrained to acknowledge, with manifest reluctance, that—"If we give credit to this *Confession* and the *Preface* thereof, those who among us are branded with that title (Anabaptists) are neither heretics, nor schismatics, but tender-hearted Christians, upon whom, through false suggestions, the hand of authority fell heavily, whilst the hierarchy stood; for they neither teach free-will, nor falling away from grace, with the Arminians; nor deny original sin, with the Pelagians; nor disclaim magistracy, with the Jesuits; nor maintain plurality of wives, with the Polygamists; nor community of goods, with the Apostolic; nor going naked, with the Adamites; much less aver the mortality of the soul, with Epicurus and Psychopannichists." But the scurrility of Featley is ingrained. Again and again, in the course of this reply of some seven or eight pages, he indulges in the old abuse. "They cover a little rat's-bane in a great quantity of sugar;" "the devil holds them up by the heel only, as Thetis did Achilles when she dipt him in the sea;" they are "like the fish and serpents in the mud of Nilus, not fully shaped; like a

statue in a stonecutter's shop, not finished;" "they are no prophets, but enthusiasts; no inspired men, but distracted; no seers, but dreamers; no expositors, but impostors; no commentators, but commenters—nay, rather commentiters; no workmen, but butchers; no carbuncles, but glow-worms; no fixed stars, but wandering lights; no lights, but *ignes fatuos*, exhalations incensed in the night, which lead fools out of their way, sometimes into thickets, sometimes into ditches and quagmires, and many of them into rivers, and over head and ears!" A valiant champion this, in good sooth, and one at which the Baptists must then have often smiled in pity.

That the *London Confession* was accepted generally, and set many minds to rest, is proved by the esteem in which we presently find the Baptists were held, both in London and elsewhere. They were to be found in the army of the Parliament, in the navy, and in civil offices of trust. Much prejudice against the Baptists was evidently broken down, even though Featley called them bad names, and declared some of their *Confession* "soured with the new leaven of Anabaptism." Two editions of this Apology were afterwards published, one in 1651 and another a year later. In 1653 a third was printed at Leith, by a small company of Baptists who were attached to the army. The alterations in the second edition chiefly modify the very marked Calvinism of the original *Confession*.

A second Calvinistic Baptist *Confession* was issued by the Somerset churches in 1656, but this does not call for any special notice. There was also a third Calvinistic *Confession* of twelve articles published in the same year as the basis of the Midland Association.

Grantham's Confession.

In 1660, Thomas Grantham and Joseph Wright presented an address to Charles the Second, to which was appended a brief confession of faith. In their address they refer to the persecutions they had endured for their opinions, their difficulties in

getting redress from the magistrates, and their desire for the King's protection. Of course the King said it was not his wish that any of his subjects should be persecuted on account of their religious opinions, promised that he would have special care over them, that none in future should molest and annoy them, and at once ordered some one to go to the Chancellor and Secretary to see that due measures were taken for their protection. What sort of "protection" they obtained is best seen in the story of their sufferings during the next quarter of a century. The *Confession* was signed by a long array of ministers, and was declared to be "owned and approved by more than twenty thousand," a clear evidence of the then flourishing character of the General Baptist Denomination. Grantham's *Confession* is purposely brief, but it is very doubtful, brief though it is, whether the King, into whose hands it was put, ever took the trouble to read it. Although equally outspoken with Smyth's, it is no mere copy of that earliest Confession. It also bears this resemblance to the *London Confession*, that it was afterwards published "to inform all men, in those days of reproach and scandal, of our innocent belief and practice," in the maintenance of which they declare themselves "resolved to suffer persecution not only to the loss of our goods, but to life itself." They also "utterly, and from their very hearts, in the Lord's fear, declare against all those wicked and devilish reports, and reproaches, falsely cast upon us, as though some of us (in and about the City of London) had lately gotten knives, hooked knives, and the like, and great store of arms besides, which were given forth by order of Parliament, intending to cut the throats of such as were contrary minded to us in matters of religion; and that such knives and arms, for the carrying on some secret design, hath been found in some of our houses by search."

Two or three articles will show the positions then held by the General Baptists. In the fourth we read:—"That God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to

repentance (2 Pet. iii. 9) and the knowledge of the truth, that they may be saved (1 Tim. ii. 4). For which end Christ hath commanded that the Gospel (to wit, the glad tidings of remission of sins) should be preached to every creature (Mark xvi. 15). So that no man shall suffer in hell (that is, the second death) for want of a Christ that died for them; but, as the Scripture saith, for denying the Lord that bought them (2 Pet. ii. 1), or because they believe not on the name of the only-begotten Son of God (John iii. 18). Unbelief, therefore, being the cause why the just and righteous God will condemn the children of men, it follows, against all contradiction, that all men, at one time or other, are put in such capacity as that (through the grace of God) they may be eternally saved (John i. 7; Acts xvii. 30; Mark vi. 6; Heb. iii. 10, 18, 19; 1 John v. 10; John iii. 17).

"*Article* 8.—That God hath, even before the foundation of the world, chosen (or elected) to eternal life such as believe, and so are in Christ (John iii. 16; Eph. i. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 13); yet confident we are, that the purpose of God, according to election, was not in the least arising from foreseen faith in, or works of righteousness done by the creature, but only from the mercy, goodness, and compassion dwelling in God; and so it is of Him that calleth (Rom. ix. 11), whose purity and unwordable holiness cannot admit of any unclean person (or thing) to be in His presence; therefore, His decree of mercy reaches only to the godly man, whom (saith David) God hath set apart for Himself (Psa. iv. 3).

"*Article* 9.—That men, not considered simply as men, but ungodly men, were of old ordained unto condemnation, considered as such, who turn the grace of God into wantonness, and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ (Jude iv.). God indeed sends a strong delusion to men, that they might be damned; but we observe that they are such (as saith the Apostle) that receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved (2 Thess. ii. 10—12); and so the indigna-

tion and wrath of God is upon every soul of man that doth evil, living and dying therein, for there is no respect of persons with God (Rom. ii. 9—11).

"*Article* 10.—*That all children dying in infancy, having not actually transgressed against the law of God in their own persons, are only subject to the first death*, which comes upon them by the sin of the first Adam, *from whence they shall be all raised by the Second Adam, and not that any one of them dying in that state* shall suffer for Adam's sin eternal punishment in hell (which is the second death), for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven (1 Cor. xv. 22; Matt. xix. 14); not daring to conclude with that uncharitable opinion of others, who, though they plead much for the bringing of children into the visible Church here on earth by baptism, yet nevertheless, by their doctrine, that Christ died but for some, shut a greater part of them out of the kingdom of heaven for ever."

Grantham's closing remarks are not without strong warrant. A high Calvinist of his day wrote a book entitled *Moral Reflections on the Number of the Elect;* in which the writer declared that he had sufficiently proved, from Scripture evidence, "*that not one in a hundred thousand; nay, probably, not one in a million, from Adam downwards, shall be saved.*"

In regard to magistrates, the twenty-fifth article says:—"We believe that there ought to be civil magistrates in all nations for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well (1 Pet. ii. 14); and that all wicked lewdness and fleshly filthiness, contrary to just and wholesome (civil) laws, ought to be punished according to the nature of the offences; and this without respect of any persons, religion, or profession whatsoever; and that we, and all men, are obliged by Gospel rules, to be faithful to the higher powers, to obey magistrates (Acts iii. 1), and to submit to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake, as saith Pet. ii. 13. *But in case the civil power do, or shall at any time impose things about matters of religion*, which we, through conscience to God cannot actually obey, then we,

with Peter also, do say that we ought, in such case, to obey God rather than men (Acts v. 29; *and accordingly do hereby declare our whole holy intent and purpose that through the grace of God we will not yield, nor in such cases in the least actually obey them;* yet humbly purposing, in the Lord's strength, patiently to suffer whatsoever shall be inflicted upon us for our conscionable forbearance."

Brave words again, and such as the Baptists in those days knew well how to utter—words, moreover, which they shortly verified by their equally heroic deeds. Grantham reprinted this *Confession* in his *Christianismus Primitivus*, adding thereto "Explanatory Statements, and the Testimony of many of the Ancient Writers of Christianity, to show that though the Composition of these Articles be New, yet the Doctrine contained therein is truly Ancient, being Witnessed both by the Holy Scriptures and later Writers of Christianity."

The *Confession* next published was called

The Orthodox Creed.

It was issued in 1678, by the General Baptists of the counties of Bucks, Hereford, Bedford, and Oxford; was written by a Thomas Monk, of Bucks, the author of a book entitled *A Cure for the Cankering Error of the New Eutychians*, and was signed by fifty-four messengers, elders, and brethren. According to Adam Taylor, the historian of the General Baptists, the design of the compiler was to approximate as closely as possible to the Calvinistic system, without giving up the tenets held by General Baptists. It differs materially in some doctrinal points from the *Confession* of 1660; attempts to explain and account for those things which the other only asserts; is highly metaphysical; is "an explication of the inexplicables, and probably introduced or encouraged that spirit of philosophizing on sacred subjects which, soon after its publication, distracted the Denomination." There is no proof that it was ever generally accepted by the General Baptists, and a contemporary writer,

Joseph Hooke, himself a messenger of their churches, thus describes this Creed, in his *Necessary Apology*:—"'Tis true some small exceptions may be made against some few passages in it, but nothing that respects the fundamentals of religion. There is nothing that directly opposeth the Word of God. But they were men who composed it; and men may err. They expounded as well as they could, and imposed upon nobody, but left others to judge for themselves, and to receive their well-meant interpretations, if they could understand them, if not, to let them alone." In other words, they were, like the other *Confessions*, expositions of sentiments, not articles of belief, and expositions that were accepted or refused as men might individually determine.

The second, third, and fourth articles, on "the Divine attributes of God and the Holy Trinity," will at once betray its metaphysical character.

"*Article* 2.—Every particle of being in heaven and earth leads us to the infinite Being of beings, namely, God; who is simplicity, that is, one mere and perfect act, without all composition, and an immense sea of perfections; who is the only eternal Being, everlasting without time, whose immense Presence is always everywhere present, having immutability without any alteration in being or will. In a word, God is infinite, of universal, unlimited, and incomprehensible perfection, most holy, wise, just, and good; whose wisdom is His justice, whose justice is His holiness, and whose wisdom, justice, holiness is—Himself. Most merciful, gracious, faithful, and true, a full fountain of love, and who is that perfect, sovereign, Divine will, the Alpha of supreme being.

"*Article* 3.—In this Divine and Infinite Being, or unity of the Godhead, there are three persons, or subsistences, the Father, the Word or Son, or the Holy Spirit, of one subsistence, power, eternity, and will; each having the whole Divine essence, yet the essence undivided. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the

Father; and the Holy Ghost is of the Father and the Son proceeding. All infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is invisible, and not to be divided in nature, or being, but distinguishable by several properties and personal relations, and we worship and adore a Trinity in Unity, and a Unity in Trinity, three persons, and but one God; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on Him.

"*Article* 4.—We confess and believe that the Son of God, or the eternal Word, is very and true God, having His personal subsistence of the Father alone, and yet for Himself as God; and of the Father as the Son, the eternal Son of an eternal Father; not later in the beginning. There never was any time when He was not; not less in dignity, not other in substance, begotten without diminution of His Father that begat, of one nature and substance with the Father; begotten of the Father, while the Father communicating wholly to the Son, which He retained wholly in Himself, because both were infinite, without inequality of nature, without division of essence, neither made, nor created, nor adopted, but begotten before all time; not a metaphorical or subordinate God; not a God by office, but a God by nature, is equal, co-essential, and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost."

In the same fashion the *Confession* discourses on "The Second Person of the Trinity taking our flesh," on "The Union of the Two Natures in Christ," on "The Communication of Properties," and "The Holy Spirit;" and we are not, therefore, surprised when we come to the thirty-eighth article to find "that the Nicene Creed, Athanasius' Creed, and the Apostles' Creed, as they are commonly called, ought thoroughly to be received and believed."

The ninth article, "Of Predestination and Election," may be compared with the eighteenth, "Of Christ dying for all mankind." The first declares:—"The decrees of God are founded on infinite wisdom and situate in eternity, and crowned with

infallibility as to the event. Now predestination unto life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world was laid, He hath constantly decreed in His counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation, those whom He hath chosen in Christ, and bring them to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour, through Jesus Christ,—whom He elected before the foundation of the world, and is called God's elect, in whom His soul delighteth, being the Lamb foreordained, and so predestinated unto the superlative glory of the hypostatical union. *And this is not for any foreseen holiness of his human nature*, with all that did flow out of the hypostatical union, being elected of mere grace, as are all members of His mystical body. And God the Father gave this, His elected and beloved Son, for a covenant to the people, and said, 'that His covenant shall stand fast with Him, and His seed shall endure for ever.' And, albeit, God the Father be the sufficient cause of all good things He intended to us, yet Christ is the meriting cause of all those good things God intended to us in election, namely, repentance, faith, and sincere obedience to all God's commandments. And so God the Father, that He might bring about the eternal salvation of His elect, chose the man Christ, with respect to His human nature, out of the fallen lump of mankind, which, in the fulness of time He made of a woman,—made under the law, to redeem those that were under it, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

"And though Christ came from Adam, as Eve did, yet not by Adam, as Cain did—viz., by natural propagation, [He was] therefore without any stain of sin. And this second Adam, being, by God's eternal decree, excepted out of the first covenant, as being neither God the Father, who we justly offended, nor yet sinful Adam, who had offended Him in breaking of it: therefore Christ, the second Adam, was a fit mediator between God and man, to reconcile both in Himself, by the shedding and sprinkling of His blood, according to God's eternal purpose in electing of Christ, of all that do, or shall believe in

Him; which eternal election, or covenant transaction between the Father and the Son, is very consistent with His revealed will in the Gospel; *for we ought not to oppose the grace of God in electing of us, nor yet the grace of the Son in dying for all men, and so for us, nor yet the grace of the Holy Ghost in propounding the Gospel, and persuading us to believe it.* For until we do believe, the effects of God's displeasure are not taken from us; for the wrath of God abideth on all them that do not believe in Christ. For the actual declaration in the Court of Conscience is by faith an instrument, not for faith as a meriting cause; for Christ is the meriting cause of eternal life to all that believe, but not of God's will to give eternal life to them, nor yet of God's decree to save us, albeit we are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Now faith is necessary as the way of our salvation, as an instrumental cause; but the active and passive obedience of Christ is necessary as a meriting cause of our salvation; therefore God's eternal decree doth not oppose His eternal will revealed in the Gospel, it being but one, not two diverse and contrary wills. For His decree, as King, decreeth the event, or what shall be done infallibly; but His command as a lawgiver showeth not what shall be done, but what is the duty of man to do, and leave undone. Therefore God hath, we believe, decreed that faith, as the means of salvation, as the end shall be joined together; that where the one is, the other must be also, for it is written: 'He that believeth shall be saved;' also, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' Now, here is a great mystery indeed, for God so ministereth His absolute decree that He leaves as much place for an efficacious conditional dispensation as if the decree itself were conditional."

The article closes with a long catalogue of Scripture references—upwards of sixty—in confirmation of the opinions expressed. It is not surprising, however, that some passages in the article were quoted by an advocate for High Calvinism, who, some quarter of a century after the publication of this

Confession, had found his way into a General Baptist pulpit in Leicestershire; and quoted as "from the writings of Thomas Monk, and about fifty brethren besides, of the 'General' faith, all stars of the first magnitude." The General Association in London in 1700, hearing of this assertion, as emphatically denied it; sent a copy of *Orthodox Creed* to the Midland brethren, with a few comments of their own; and advised that the minister should be dealt with, "as a preacher of false doctrine, and as one who slandered his brethren." This incident illustrates the "uncertain sound" given by the *Confession*, and perhaps accounts for its want of general favour.

The twentieth article touches on "The Free Will in Man:"—"God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty and power of acting upon choice, that is neither forced, nor by any necessity of nature, determined to do good or evil; but man, in a state of innocency, had such power and liberty of will to choose and perform that which was acceptable and well-pleasing to God, according to the requirement of the first covenant; but he, falling from his state of innocency, wholly lost all ability, or liberty of will, to any spiritual good for his eternal salvation, his will being now in bondage under sin and Satan, and therefore not able of his own strength to convert himself, nor prepare himself thereunto, without God's grace taketh away the enmity out of his will, and by His special grace freeth him from his natural bondage under sin, enabling him to will freely and sincerely that which is spiritually good, according to the tenure of the new covenant of grace in Christ; though not perfectly, according to the tenure of the first covenant, which perfection of will is only attainable in the state of glory, after the redemption or resurrection of our fleshly bodies."

In speaking "Of Vocation and Effectual Calling," the next article says:—"That general calling is, when God by means of His Word and Spirit, freely of His own grace and goodness, doth ministerially acquaint mankind with His gracious good purpose of salvation by Jesus Christ, inviting and wooing them

to come to Him, and to accept of Christ, revealing unto them the Gospel covenant, and that those that with cordial hearts do improve this common grace, He in time worketh unfeigned faith and sincere repentance in them; and by His grace they come to accept Christ as their only Lord and Saviour, with their whole heart, and God becomes their Father in Christ, and they being then effectually called, are by faith united to Jesus Christ by grace unto salvation."

Like Smyth's *Confession*, and Grantham's, the *Orthodox Creed* also strongly insists on the salvation of children dying in infancy: Smyth declaring, "that being born in innocency, without sin, that they dying are undoubtedly saved;" Grantham, that "all children dying in infancy, have not actually transgressed against the love of God in their own persons, and only subject to the first death, from whence they shall be all raised by the second Adam;" and the *Orthodox Creed*, "that all little children dying in their infancy, viz., before they are capable to choose either good or evil, whether born of believing parents, or unbelieving parents, shall be saved by the grace of God and the merit of Christ their Redeemer, and the work of the Holy Ghost, and so being made members of the invisible Church, shall enjoy life everlasting."

Smyth objects to the use of oaths (Article 88); but Grantham, in his *Christianismus Primitivus*, says, "that many Christians are doubtful in this case, but without sufficient grounds;" and the *Orthodox Creed* also declares "that an oath is to be taken in the plain and common sense of the words, without equivocation or mental reservation, in a solemn and reverent using of God's holy name; and such an oath we believe all Christians, when lawfully called thereunto by the magistrate, may take; but the foolish and monastical vows of Papists, and all idle and vain swearing is abominable and wicked profaning of the holy name of God."

The articles on "The Civil Magistrate" and "Liberty of Conscience" may also be cited to illustrate, still further, the

uniform testimony of the misrepresented and falsely called Anabaptists. In the first, it is declared, "The supreme Lord and King of all the earth hath ordained civil magistrates to be under Him over the people, for His own glory and the public good. And the office of a magistrate may be accepted of and executed by Christians, when lawfully called thereunto; and God hath given the power of the sword into the hands of all lawful magistrates for the defence and encouragement of them that do well, and for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the maintenance of justice and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each kingdom and commonwealth; and *they may wage war upon just and necessary occasions.* And subjection in the Lord ought to be yielded to the magistrates in all lawful things commanded by them, for conscience' sake, with prayers for them for a blessing upon them, paying all lawful and reasonable custom and tribute to them, for the assisting of them against foreign, domestical, and potent enemies."

Equally distinct and emphatic is the teaching of the second:— "The Lord Jesus Christ, who is King of Kings, and Lord of all by purchase, and is Judge of quick and dead, *is the only Lord of conscience*, having a peculiar right to be so; He having died for that end, to take away the guilt, and to destroy the filth of sin, that keeps the consciences of all men in thraldom and bondage, till they are set free by His special grace. And, *therefore, He would not have the consciences of men in bondage to or imposed upon by any usurpation, tyranny, or command whatsoever, contrary to His revealed Word, which is the only rule He hath left for the consciences of all men to be ruled, and regulated, and guided by, through the assistance of His Spirit.* And, therefore, the obedience to any command or decree that is not revealed in, or consonant to His Word, in the holy oracles of Scripture, is a betraying of the true liberty of conscience. And the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute blind obedience, destroys liberty of conscience and reason also, it being repugnant to both; and that no pretended good

end whatsoever, by any man, can make that action, obedience, or practice, lawful and good, that is not grounded in or upon the authority of Holy Scripture, or right reason agreeable thereunto.' The closing part of this article, and the expressions used in others, arise from the Creed seeking, as the title-page declares, 'to unite and confirm all true Protestants in the fundamental articles of the Christian religion, *against the errors and heresies of Rome.*' "

The next most remarkable public Confession is now known as

The Confession of the Assembly.

It first appeared a year earlier than the *Orthodox Creed*, and has ever since been regarded as a just exposition of the sentiments of the Particular, or Calvinistic, Baptists. It was issued anonymously, "by the elders and brethren of many congregations of Christians (baptized upon profession of faith) in London and the country." A second edition appeared in 1688; and the following year it formally received the sanction of the General Assembly. The notice, "appended to many copies of the edition of 1688, and to all subsequent editions," was as follows:—"We, the ministers and messengers of, and concerned for, upwards of one hundred baptized congregations in England and Wales (denying Arminianism), being met together in London, from the third of the seventh month, to the eleventh of the same, 1689, to consider of some things that might be for the glory of God, and the good of these congregations, have thought meet, (for the satisfaction of all other Christians that differ from us in the point of baptism), to recommend to their perusal the Confession of our Faith, printed for and sold by Mr. John Harris, at the Harrow, in the Poultry, which Confession we own, as containing the doctrine of our faith and practice; and do desire that the members of our churches respectively do furnish themselves therewith." Among other signatures appended to this "Notice" are those of Knollys, Kiffin, the two Collins'—Hercules and William, Keach, Tom-

kins, &c. They subscribed to it, as they assure us, "in the name and behalf of the Assembly."

The Westminster Confession, made in the days of Charles the First, is followed nearly word for word, with such omissions or additions as their own opinions required. A few of the articles, or chapters, may be quoted, omitting the numerous Scripture references with which each of them is crowded.

The third chapter thus deals with the subject "Of God's Decrees":—

"1. God hath decreed in Himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably, all things whatsoever come to pass; yet so as thereby God is not the author of sin, nor hath fellowship with any therein, nor is violence offered to the will of His creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established; in which appears His wisdom in disposing all things, and power, and faithfulness in accomplishing His decree. 2. Although God knoweth whatsoever may, or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet hath He not decreed anything, because He foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions. 3. By the decree of God for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated and foreordained to eternal life, through Jesus Christ, to the praise of His glorious grace; others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation, to the praise of His glorious justice. 4. These angels and men thus predestinated, and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be increased or diminished. 5. Those of mankind that are predestinated to life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love; without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving Him thereunto.

6. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so He hath, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto, wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ, by His Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified and saved, and kept by His power through faith unto salvation; neither are any other redeemed by Christ, or effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only. 7. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care; that men, attending the will of God revealed in His Word and yielding obedience thereto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election; so shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God, and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the Gospel."

The article on "free will" is very similar to that which appears in the *Orthodox Creed;* but the one on "effectual calling" is very different. "Those whom God hath predestinated unto life, He is pleased, in His appointed and accepted time, effectually to call by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds, spiritually and savingly, to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by His Almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace. 2. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, nor from any power or agency in the creature, co-working with His special grace, the creature being wholly passive therein, being dead in sins and trespasses, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it, and

that by no less power than that which raised up Christ from the dead. 3. *Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit*, who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth; *so, also, are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.* 4. Others not elected, though they may be called by the ministry of the Word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet not being effectually drawn by the Father, they neither will nor can truly come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved: much less can men that receive not the Christian religion be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess."

We give another of these articles, that on "the perseverance of the saints," since this article, and the one on "personal election" are specially pointed out as distinguishing them from the other Baptists then existing: "Those whom God hath accepted in the Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, and given the precious faith of His elect unto, can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein unto the end, and be eternally saved, seeing the gifts and callings of God are without repentance (whence He still begets and nourisheth in them faith, repentance, love, joy, and hope, and all the graces of the Spirit unto immortality); and though many storms and floods arise and beat against them, yet they shall never be able to take them off that foundation and rock which by faith they are fastened upon; notwithstanding, through unbelief and the temptations of Satan, the sensible sight and love of God may for a time be clouded and obscured from them, yet He is still the same, and they shall be sure to be kept by the power of God unto salvation, whence they shall enjoy their purchased possession, they being engraven upon the palms of His hands, and their name having been written in the book of life from all eternity. This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own

free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father, upon the efficacy and merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, and union with Him, the oath of God, the abiding of His Spirit, and the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace; from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof. 3. And though they may, through the temptation of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sin, and for a time continue therein, whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve His Holy Spirit, come to have their graces and comforts impaired, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded, hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves, yet they shall renew their repentance, and be preserved, through faith in Christ Jesus, to the end."

There is an appendix to the *Assembly's Confession*, entirely devoted to a more careful examination of the arguments commonly advanced in favour of infant baptism. The *Confession* itself has been frequently reprinted since its endorsement by the Assembly in 1689, and four years after that date it was "ordered to be translated into Latin with all convenient speed;" but it is not known whether this was actually done.

The Somerset Confession.

A brief Confession was published in 1691 by some churches in Somerset, and the neighbouring counties. It consists of twenty-seven articles, and agrees, in all material points, with *Grantham's Confession*. The original title is, "*A Short Confession, or a Brief Narrative of Faith.*" In the introduction they say, "It is not for any ambition of our attainments above others, neither for want of understanding that there has been sufficient said to these things already, by such pens as we prefer and honour, as being far more able to set forth the

great truths of the Gospel than ourselves. Neither do we hereby pretend to be bringing forth new things, but to bear our testimony to the faith once delivered to the saints, in which we trust, through grace, we are established; but our reasons why we thus publish are,—(1) We are, on these articles of faith, united together as one people to worship and serve God, with one mind and consent (until we see just cause to relinquish), holily and resolvedly, in the strength of the Lord, to persevere thereunto to the end. (2) Because we are looked upon as a people degenerated from almost all other baptized congregations, at least in other parts of our nation; so that they are not only unfree, but are even afraid to have any affinity with us in the work, worship, and service of the Lord; which did incline us to appear in public after this manner, to give a short account of our faith in the great things of the Gospel; so that, if possible, we may have more acquaintance, acceptance, and fellowship with those churches of Jesus Christ that we believe are one with us in the most material things of the Gospel, both relating to matters of faith and practice, who, it may be, do carry themselves strange for want of right understanding of our faith. But if, when all is done, it do not answer the end for which it is intended, but we must notwithstanding *be looked upon as a bye-people, to be rejected, or laid aside*, we trust we shall keep close to the Lord in the things that we at present understand, until we are by some divine authority convinced of some religious mistakes therein, &c.; and now we shall proceed to explain ourselves by those brief articles of faith following."

In the fourth article on "the extent of the death of Christ," the *Confession* declares, "Concerning the extent of the death of our dear Redeemer we believe, that suitably to the great end of God the Father in sending Him into the world, He gave Himself a ransom for all mankind, for the world, the whole world, and that thereby there is a way of reconciliation, acceptation, and salvation opened to all men; from whence we

conclude, that if any man came short of obtaining reconciliation, acceptation, and salvation, it is not for want of grace in the Father, nor a sacrifice in the Son."

In the article on "God's decrees," the *Confession* says, "that the Word of God is God's decreed will, and that there is no secret or decreed will in God, contrary to His revealed Word and will;" "that whatever God absolutely decrees will come to pass; but that many things that do come to pass are not decreed of God. . . . It might suit the nature of the devil, or wicked men, to decree wickedness; but far be it from the righteous God so to do. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" And in the article on "election," after repeating the words of the *Assembly's Confession*, and declaring that they do not hold this doctrine, but "that the infinitely wise and holy God, suitable to His name and nature, did elect and choose unto Himself from all eternity, and (merely of His own good pleasure), out of the whole body and bulk of mankind, an entire species or sort of men, namely, those that in time do believe and sincerely obey Him, patiently continuing in the way of well doing to the end;" that, moreover, "this election is in Christ Jesus, of God's eternal purpose and grace, before the foundation of the world," and "extends to the whole number of the godly in all nations, throughout all ages, under the various dispensations under which they live."

It does not appear what was the result of this desire for closer union with other Baptists, or whether the authors of this *Confession* were still thought to be a "bye-people;" but Adam Taylor says that the *Confession* itself was not much known in other parts of the kingdom.

Besides the various public expositions of Baptist opinion in the Seventeenth Century already mentioned, there were others published by private individuals, or for the use of particular congregations. John Bunyan's and Vavasour Powell's are illustrations of the first; the Confessions of the Keachs, father and son, are illustrations of the second. When Benjamin

Keach published his short *Confession* in 1697, for the special use of the congregation at Horsley Down. Among other reasons assigned for its issue is this—that the larger *Confession* was out of print. He adds to his abridged version a brief treatise on "the true glory of a church and its discipline." The *Confession* published by his son, Elias Keach, for the use of the congregation meeting at Tallow Chandlers' Hall, on Dowgate Hill, is similar to the father's, except in the preface and dedications.

It only remains for us now to notice the brief

Articles of Religion

agreed upon by the first "Assembly of Free-grace General Baptists," in June, 1770. They are rather a declaration of their views on those points which had been the chief subjects of difference between themselves and the older branch of the General Baptists, than a full *Confession of Faith*. We give the articles entire:—

"1. *On the fall of man.*—We believe that man was made upright in the image of God, free from all disorder, natural and moral; capable of obeying perfectly the will and command of God his Maker; yet capable also of sinning: which he unhappily did, and thereby laid himself under the Divine curse; which, we think, could include nothing less than the mortality of the body and the eternal punishment of the soul. His nature also became depraved, his mind defiled, and the powers of his soul weakened—that both he was, and his posterity are, captives of Satan till set at liberty by Christ.

"2. *On the nature and perpetual obligation of the moral law.*—We believe that the moral law not only extends to the outward actions of life, but to all the powers and faculties of the mind, to every desire, temper, and thought; that it demands an entire devotion of all the powers and faculties of both body and soul to God; or, in our Lord's words, 'To love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength;'

that this law is of perpetual duration and obligation, to all men, at all times, and in all places or parts of the world. And we suppose that this law was obligatory to Adam in his perfect state—was more clearly revealed in the Ten Commandments, and more fully explained in many other parts of the Bible.

"3. *On the person and work of Christ.*—We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is God and man united in one Person; or possessed of Divine perfection united to human nature, in a way which we pretend not to explain, but think ourselves bound by the Word of God firmly to believe; that He suffered to make a full atonement for all the sins of all men, and thereby He has wrought out for us a complete salvation, which is received by, and as a free gift communicated to, all that believe in Him, without the consideration of any works done by us in order to entitle us to this salvation: though we firmly believe that no faith is the means of justification but that which produces good works.

"4. *On salvation by faith.*—We believe that as this salvation is held forth to all to whom the Gospel revelation comes, without exception, we ought, in the course of our ministry, to propose or offer this salvation to all those who attend our ministry; and having opened to them their ruined, wretched state by nature and practice, to invite all, without exception, to look to Christ by faith without regard to anything in, or done by, themselves; that they may, in this way alone, that is, by faith, be possessed of this salvation.

"5. *On regeneration by the Holy Spirit.*—We believe that, as the Scriptures assure us, we are justified, made the children of God, purified and sanctified by faith; that when a person comes to believe in Jesus (and not before), he is regenerated, or renewed in his soul by the Spirit of God, through the instrumentality of the Word, now believed and embraced; which renewal of his soul naturally produces holiness in heart and life; that this holiness is the means of preparing us for the enjoyments and employments of the heavenly world, and

of preserving in our souls a comfortable sense of our interest in the Lord, and of our title to glory, as well as to set a good example before men, and to recommend our blessed Redeemer's cause to the world.

"6. *On baptism.*—We believe that it is the indispensable duty of all who repent and believe the Gospel, to be baptized by immersion in water, in order to be initiated into a church state; and that no person ought to be received into the Church without submission to this ordinance."

CHAPTER VII.

PUBLIC DISPUTATIONS ON BAPTISM.

BAPTISTS have been compelled to be controversialists. Their position, among all the varieties of Christian belief, is solitary and peculiar; and on them, therefore, is rightly thrown the burden of proof. Nor have they ever shown any reluctance to accept the responsibilities of their position. But in the Seventeenth Century, when they started afresh into such prominence in England, there were many other reasons than their isolated position for taking up the weapons of controversy—they were misunderstood, misrepresented, defamed; the most frivolous and the most scandalous charges were made against them from the pulpit and the press; they were literally "the sect everywhere spoken against." Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Brownists, Independents, much as they might differ from each other, all agreed amazingly in this—their denunciation of the Baptists.

Various methods were adopted for removing this general dislike, and answering the wicked accusations made against them. They issued pamphlets in defence of their opinions. They subscribed to numerous *Confessions of Faith*. They were ready, in season and out of season, to meet their opponents. They challenged them to public disputations; now in London, now in the country. Ordinary buildings proved too small and inconvenient for the excited and eager crowds who attended these

disputations; and the largest accommodation being afforded by the parish church, to the parish church they commonly hurried. The occasion of these discussions was often the fierce opposition of local clergymen, but was sometimes the uneasy consciences on the subject of baptism of some members of their congregations. The victory, as in all such public discussions, was usually claimed by both sides. The disputations themselves illustrate the habits and the ferment of a former age.

It is unfortunate that most of the reports of these public debates are from the pens of opponents. There were no newspaper reporters in those days; but some friend of the disputants dotted down a few rough notes during the debate, which were afterwards filled up from memory. Large room was, therefore, left for partiality and unfairness. In some cases the opponents of the Baptists not only published these one-sided versions of the debates, but enriched or disfigured them by marginal commentaries; one of them thought to secure wider success for his cause by publishing, with his report, a scandalous frontispiece in which fifteen different sorts of Anabaptists are supposed to be depicted.

The history of all the public disputes between the Baptists and their opponents, from the outbreak of the Civil War to the Restoration of Charles the Second, would alone fill a bulky volume. But these only represent a tithe of the discussions which have been held. An account of some of the most famous debates will illustrate the rest. Perhaps the most notorious was one of the earliest. This dispute was held with

Dr. Daniel Featley, in Southwark.

The only account of it which has come down to us is supplied by the doctor's own book, entitled, *The Dippers dipt: or, the Anabaptists duck'd and plung'd over head and ears, at a Disputation in Southwark. Together with a large and full Discourse of their original, several sorts, peculiar errors, high*

attempts against the State, capitall punishments, with an application to these times. London 1645.

The scene of the dispute was "somewhere in Southwark;" but where, does not appear. Most probably, however, it was in the parish church. Sir John Lenthall was present, "with many knights, ladies, and gentlemen." There were also not a few of the illiterate people on whom Dr. Featley looked down with such bitter disdain, people who were then being stirred into great excitement by other matters besides those in dispute. The discussion was held in the year that Charles the First had broken with his Parliament. Two months before it began the royal standard was unfurled at Nottingham, and a week after it had closed Charles fought his first battle.

The disputants can hardly be regarded as fairly matched. Featley was already a veteran debater. He was now sixty-two; and had long before won his spurs in various encounters with the Jesuits in Paris, when chaplain to the English ambassador. The wily followers of Ignatius Loyola, so Dr. Featley's most intimate friend assures us, "contemned him for that he was low of stature, yet admired him for his ready answers and shrewd distinctions." During his residence in the French capital he had not only converted "a Spanish Frier," but had earned for himself a great reputation as a polemic. Featley's name was to be found on the tables hung up in Continental seminaries, and was bracketed with the great schoolmen Bonaventura, Duns Scotus, Aquinas, and others. If the first was styled "the Seraphic," the second "the Subtle," and the third "the Angelic," Featley was known as "the Sagacious and Ardent." It is also cheering to know that, despite his vilification of the Baptists, his friend of "thirty-seven years' duration," had found him "meek, gracious, affable, merciful."

The opponents of Featley were four Baptists, one of whom the Doctor calls "a Scotchman," and the other "Cuffin." It is hardly necessary to say that the last was William Kiffin, who had now been for two years pastor of Devonshire-square chapel,

London. Of the other disputants we have no information. Kiffin was a vigorous young man of six-and-thirty, who had yet fifty-nine years of pastoral and chequered life before him.

"The company being placed, Dr. Featley made a short ejaculatory prayer to God to give a blessing to the meeting." The Scotchman opened the debate. "Master Doctor"—(perhaps he did not know he was "*acutissimus acerrimusque*," or he would have given him his full honours)—"Master Doctor; we come to dispute with you at this time, not for contention's sake, but to receive satisfaction. *We* hold, that the baptism of infants cannot be proved lawful by the testimony of Scripture, or by Apostolical tradition. If *you*, therefore, can prove the same either way, we shall willingly submit unto you." The doctor feigns surprise at this simple question. "Are you, then, Anabaptists? I am deceived in my expectations. I thought the end of this meeting had been to have reasoned with you about other matters, and that my task would have been to have justified our Communion Book, and the lawfulness and necessity of coming to church, which I am ready to do. Anabaptism, (which I perceive is the point you hold,) is a heresy long since condemned both by the Greek and Latin Church." After this declaration the "sagacious and ardent" polemic insults his opponents before he has tried their calibre, by adding, "I could have wished also that ye had brought scholars with you, who knew how to dispute, which I conceive you do not, so far as I can guess by your habit [dress], and am informed concerning your professions. For there are but two ways of disputing: by authority, and by reason." If they elect the first method, the doctor tells them that they must be prepared to produce the Scriptures in the original languages; since "translations are not authentical," because they contain errors, and "in the undoubted Word of God there can be no error." This production of the original Scriptures, he intimates, is out of the question, since none of them understand either Greek or Hebrew. If they elect the second method,

they are no better off. He will have them, in that case, "conclude syllogistically, in mood and figure, which," he adds, "I take to be out of your element."

The doctor now expresses his desire,—since *they* had earnestly sought this meeting, "and are so well conceited of themselves that they take upon them to teach others,"—to put them through their catechism. He begins by asking the Scotchman some questions on the doctrine of the Trinity; and informs us, in his marginal comments on his own answer, "The venturous Scotchman was so stunned with this blow, that he gave in, and spake no more for a good space." The doctor's keen eyes observed, however, "that he wrote something, and gave it to some there present."

Mr. Kiffin now speaks; "declares," says Featley, that "he has not come to dispute, but to receive satisfaction of some doubts, which, if the doctor can answer him, he shall submit." "This Cuffin," adds the marginal note, "is said to be one of the first that subscribed to the Anabaptist *Confession*, printed in 1644." But neither Kiffin's answers nor the Scotchman's please Sir John Lenthall, who breaks in upon the discussion to "bid the doctor resolve the doubts himself;" when Featley avows that his sole purpose in putting his questions was, "to make it appear to the auditors how unfit these men were to take upon them the office of teacher," since they were "so imperfect in the fundamental points of Catechism."

Kiffin, taking advantage of the doctor's invitation, "to propound what question he pleased," asks—"What is the nature of a visible Church?—what, the matter and form of it?—or what the visible Church of Christ made up of, by authority of the Scripture?" evidently seeking to bring the debate back again to its original purpose. The doctor replies, "The Protestant Church has but two 'notes,' and both are found in the Church of England, namely, (1) the sincere preaching of the Word, and (2) the due administration of the Sacraments." Kiffin contends that neither of these are discernible, and denies

that the Thirty-nine Articles and the Book of Common Prayer are agreeable to God's Word. Featley even makes him say, that he (Kiffin) had "*never seen* the Thirty-nine Articles, and knew not what they were!"—a statement as incredible as it is audacious.

Again the volatile doctor is brought back to the chief point of the debate, "whether baptism can be rightly administered, agreeable to God's Word, if given to children;" but while he was on the point of proving it, "out of Scripture," "another Anabaptist interposed with a question, whether the Church of England was a true Church, since she compelled men to come to her, and persecuted those who refused to come." Featley quotes the example of King Josiah to prove that kings ought to "compel their subjects in matters religious," and "so blankt this third Anabaptist, that, to save his credit, he started up another question," to which the doctor replied syllogistically, and was instantly answered by "the blankt Anabaptist:" "But the Word of God does not command us to come to your steeple-houses, and the King hath nothing to do to command us in this kind." Again Featley answers by a syllogism: "The King hath power to command you in all things that are lawful; it is lawful, and noways repugnant to God's Word, but most agreeable thereunto, to come to our steeple-houses, as you call them; therefore, the King hath power to command you to come to our Church." The Baptist declares he (the doctor) makes an idol of the church; but assures him that if "one of our society should preach in Olaves, or Mary Overis Church, he (the Baptist) would hear him."

This is construed by Featley into "the Anabaptist yielding his buckler, namely, that the magistrate ought to be obeyed, when he commanded men to hear God's Word in the church!"

The debate now wanders off to the question—whether the Baptists or the Church of England have true pastors?—Featley contending that since the Anabaptists have no sending, no calling, no imposition of hands upon them, they had not

lawful pastors; and one of the Baptists declaring that, "none among us teach but they have ordination, for they are elected, examined, and proved;" but if the doctor wishes to know whether they have imposition of hands, "if he will come to his (the Baptist's) church, he will see for himself."

Kiffin grows impatient at the frequent digressions of Featley, and says, "I pray you, Master Doctor, come to the point; how prove you the baptism of children to be lawful by the Word of God?" A little more skirmishing on Featley's part follows this distinct and definite question, and at length he affirms that "the Scripture proofs are of two sorts: some probable, some necessary." The "probable" are, the baptisms of households; and the "necessary," circumcision and the declaration, that except men are born of the water and the Spirit, they cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Kiffin reminds the doctor that "men" are here spoken of, not children; and the Scotchman suggests, that, according to Featley's showing, only children baptized are saved. Featley accepts both conclusions, but says, in regard to Kiffin's objection, "that in Christ there is no difference of age or sex," and in answer to the Scotchman's, "that the children of the faithful are holy" (1 Cor. vii. 14), and therefore they enter heaven. The last reply did not satisfy one of the Baptists, and he instantly put in, "But the Apostle meaneth, that such are not bastards, at which," says Featley, "the company laughing, as a ridiculous answer."

Another opponent now appears, an Anabaptist who has caught the doctor's trick of syllogizing, and who boldly denies that either Featley, or others like him, ought to preach. "They that persecute good men are ungodly men," says this fourth disputant; "but all your bishops persecute good men; therefore, the bishops are ungodly men." The doctor claims that at least two bishops did not deserve that censure, the primate of Ireland, and Bishop of Potter; but the Baptist declares, that when he himself was dragged before the High Commission, the

Irish primate "sate there, and by his silence gave consent." Featley wriggled out of this home-thrust by saying, "that the Archbishop of Armagh had no power to give sentence in the High Commission *of England*, and if he (the doctor) truly knew for what cause the Anabaptist had been brought up before the High Commission, he had no doubt he should be able to prove that the sentence was just, "since you are one of those who do not come to church, and will not hear our preachers, but only some of your own sect, and those no better than mere laymen."

The debate here turns upon the question of lay preaching, the Baptist contending that the division of people into laymen and clergymen is Popish; that the seven deacons of the church at Jerusalem all preached, and yet they were all what the Popish Church called laymen. To this Featley replies, that neither the word "Trinity, sacrament, nor other like terms," were in the Scriptures, "yet the sense of them is there," and so is the distinction of clergy and laity; that the law was to be learnt from the priest's mouth;" and that his own priesthood, and that of his brethren, was the same in substance, "but not for ceremony and manner of worship;" and as for the deacons of the church at Jerusalem, "they were all men upon whom the Apostles had laid their hands." "Prove," said he, triumphantly, "prove that any preached who had not imposition of hands." To this Kiffin replied by quoting the passage in the Acts of the Apostles which describes how "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere, preaching the word," and preaching, not without great effect; and that Peter had also declared (1 Pet. iv. 10), "as every man hath received the spirit, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." Kiffin adds to this reply, "If God have given us a talent, it is our duty to improve it."

Featley rejoins, that all the men scattered abroad, were "such as the Apostles had laid hands on;" and that Peter's

words refer not to *public* teaching and preaching, but to *private* admonition, "such as every godly master of a family useth in his house, instructing his children and his servants the best that he can." But he concludes the point in dispute by ending with this remark: "It is true, in time of persecution, we read of one Frumentius, a layman, who, in his travels converted some to the Christian faith, confirming the truth of the Christian religion by the Scriptures." "That," said Kiffin, "is all we desire to do." But Featley was "sagacious," if he were also "ardent;" and he therefore instantly replies, that "that was no preaching publicly by virtue of a pastoral function or expounding Scripture." It is hard to see what else it was; and the fact that the bishops afterwards sent ministers to reap the fruit of the labours of Frumentius, or, as Featley expresses it, "to accomplish that work which he had so happily begun," does not alter the character of his preaching.

Further discussion follows on the question of public and private worship, and the value of the Geneva version or the King's translation, during which Featley states two reasons against lay preaching:—(1) "None ought to take upon them the office of pastor, or minister of the Word, who are not able to reprove and convince heretics and all gainsayers, a thing that lay preachers are unable to do from their ignorance of the original Scriptures; and (2) Since the office of a minister is a holy office, none may meddle with it but those that have a lawful calling thereunto," the last point being supported by the judgments upon Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, upon Uzzah, Uzziah, and the husbandmen and herdsmen whom the Prophet Zechariah reproved. "So you artificers may be ashamed of your prophesying, and say, 'I am a tradesman; I am no prophet; men taught me to exercise a handicraft from my youth.'"

It is now Kiffin's turn to speak, since this last arrow was levelled at him. "Being angry at this," says Featley, he said, "Master Doctor, I am more lawfully called to preach the

Word than you, and that I will prove by Scripture." To which Featley, with equal ill-temper, rejoined, "You will have a hard task of it, for neither my name nor yours are found in Scripture, neither is there any colour in all God's Word for any layman's preaching, *much less for such an illiterate artificer as you are.*" Kiffin next charges the bishops with living in known sin, and Featley retorts by referring to a scandal which had recently occasioned trouble in the Devonshire-square church, and appealing to Kiffin whether he was not himself in the habit of asking God's forgiveness for sins of conscience and ignorance, or whether he had not idle thoughts of earthly lusts and desires? Of course Kiffin, as an honest man, confessed that he had; but contended that that was not approving of known sin. Featley asserts that "the learned, grave, and religious bishop," by whom he himself had been ordained, "died without spot or stain"; and thinking of him he was prompted to say to Kiffin, "I cannot sufficiently admire [wonder at] your boldness;" to which Kiffin replied, that "whosoever the bishop was, he was but a particular man; and Christ gave the power of ordaining to His Church, not to any particular man." The doctor answers, that after all, "some particular men ought to execute this power of ordination."

"Here," says the marginal note, "it grew late, and the Conference broke off." But, adds Featley, "the issue of the Conference was," (mark the self-complacency of the doctor), "first, the *Knights, ladies* and *gentlemen* gave the doctor great thanks," [privately, of course]; "secondly, three of the Anabaptists went away discontented, the fourth seemed in part satisfied, and desired a second meeting; but the next day, conferring with the rest of that sect, he altered his resolution, and neither he, nor any other of that sect ever since that day troubled the doctor, or any other minister in this borough with a second challenge."

On reviewing the doctor's own version of the debate, it is difficult to see wherein he succeeded in confounding his op-

ponents. The debate itself was not published until two years and a quarter after it was held, when other and more exciting events had well-nigh obliterated all recollection of it from the minds of "the auditors," and when the doctor himself was in custody at Peter-house, London, suspected by the Parliament of being a spy. Shortly after his imprisonment, another victim was brought in, not for being a spy, but for daring to preach against infant baptism. This was Henry Denne. Up to this time Denne had not seen Featley's version of the dispute, nor his further charge against the Baptists in the same book. At once, however, Denne challenged Featley to debate with him the whole question; but after going over the first of the ten arguments in his work, Featley declined all further discussion by word of mouth, on the plea that it was not safe to dispute without a licence from the Parliament. He, nevertheless, agreed to carry on the controversy by writing. Featley issued his savage attack on the Baptists on the 10th of January, 1644, and in little less than a month Denne's reply was ready, under the title of *Antichrist Unmasked*. Not long after, Samuel Richardson took up the challenge thrown down by "the sagacious and ardent" polemic, and published *Some Brief Considerations on Dr. Featley's Book*, in which the doctor gets a severe handling. Richardson's reply to the chuckle with which Featley ends his own very one-sided version of the dispute in Southwark is as follows:—"The knights and ladies thanked him, but he cannot say he deserved it. The Anabaptists went away discontented and grieved. It seems they were very sorrowful to see his great blindness and hardness of heart. He saith, none of them ever after that troubled him; it seems they could do him no good, and so they resolved to leave him to God, till He should please to open his eyes."

Featley's great friend and admirer exultingly refers to "all his sermons in a great book in folio," to his "supplement to Sir Humphrey Linde's book;" to his work against Arminius, and all of his rabble;" to his "Sea-Gull, a tract against a

gross imposture;" to his "Meditations," and his "Handmaid to Devotions;" but he did not foresee that his bosom friend would hereafter be chiefly remembered for "his book against the Anabaptists," however "seasonable and necessary" he might deem it "for those unsettled and wanton times." "As Elias, being carried up in a fiery chariot, did let fall his mantle from him for Elisha's comfort and behoof; so," says Dr. Leo, in his funeral oration, "our Featley, burning with zeal for God's glory, and for the good of His saints, hath left behind him several tokens of his learning and love to divers friends."* The Baptists, however, can neither be reckoned among the number of his "friends," nor can his legacy to them be regarded as a token of his "love."

The year after the Southwark dispute Mr. John Batt and Mr. Thomas Lamb held a public discussion at TARLING, in Essex, with three Pædobaptists, Messrs. Stalham, Newton, and Gray; and Benjamin Cox and Richard Baxter held another at COVENTRY. Cox was the son of a bishop, and for some time minister at Bedford. A number of people in Coventry having embraced Baptist opinions sent for Cox to form them into a distinct society. The Presbyterians took alarm; the pulpits in the old city rang with cries against the Anabaptists; and Baxter, who was then hiding in Coventry, challenged Cox to dispute with him on the subject of baptism, by word of mouth and by writing. Cox accepted the challenge, and worsted his antagonist; but no account of the dispute is preserved except by Baxter. The Committee heard of the discussion, and ordered Cox at once to leave the city and never more to return. On refusing, he was committed to Coventry goal. Baxter was reflected upon at the time for conniving at this hard usage of his opponent, since Baxter was then living

* A sermon preached at Lambeth, April 21, 1645, at the funeral of that learned and polemical divine, Daniel Featley, Doctor in Divinity, late preacher there. With a short relation of his life and death. By William Leo, D.D. London, 1645.

as a friend in the Governor's house, had great influence with the Committee, and might have secured his release by a single word. It is, however, only fair to mention that Baxter himself denied the charge of ever *urging* this arbitrary act; but it is plain enough that Baxter might have prevented the imprisonment altogether, if he had been so minded. He secured his speedy release on being asked to obtain it by Mr. Pinson.

The Presbyterian party being now in power, checked for a time the free discussion on infant baptism, but left unlimited license to abuse the Baptists in the hands of their ministers. One of the most virulent and unscrupulous of these was the man whom Milton styled "The *shallow* Edwards," author of *Gangræna*. He lectured in Christ Church, London, on Tuesday mornings, and took occasion in nearly every sermon to speak evil of his Baptist neighbours. On one occasion Kiffin was present, and smarting under the scurrility of the preacher, he sent up to the pulpit the following moderate and dignified letter, to which he never received any reply:—

"*To Mr. Edwards.*

"Sir,—

"You stand as one professing yourself to be instructed of Christ, with abilities from God to throw down errors, and therefore to that end do preach every third day (Tuesday). May it therefore please you, and those that employ you in that work, to give them leave whom you so braved, as publicly to object against what you say when your sermon is ended, as you declare yourself. And we hope it will be an increase of further light to all that fear God, and put a large advantage into your hands, if you have any truth on your side, to cause it to shine with more evidence; and I hope we shall do it with moderation, and as becometh Christians.

"Yours,

"1646. "William Kiffin."

In the following year a public disputation was held in the parish church of NEWPORT PAGNELL. A great company of ministers and people were present. Mr. John Gibbs took the side of the Baptists, and Mr. Richard Carpenter defended the principles of the Pædobaptists. Carpenter published an account of the dispute under the following title :—*The Anabaptist washt and washt, and shrunk in the washing ; or a Scholasticall discussion of the much-agitated controversy concerning Infant Baptism, occasioned by a publick Disputation, before a great assembly of Ministers, and other persons of worth, in the church of Newport Pagnell; betwixt Mr. Gibbs, minister there, and the author, Richard Carpenter, Independent.* From Carpenter's account of the origin of this discussion it is evident that he had indulged in many unneighbourly and bitter remarks about Mr. Gibbs and the Baptists. Speaking of his having "baptized a child, after preaching in the Newport Pagnell Church, before a numerous auditory, congealed and consisting of the more solid and sapid part of the town and country;" he adds, "in the sober performance of which mysterious work, the minister unsettled in place, and (it seems) in person, professing for Anabaptism, and suddenly rapt into a vertiginous motion, interrupted me; and presently summoned me, by a challenge in the face of the congregation, to give him and his brethren of the Separation, a meeting there in publick, after his twelve days' preparation, *Parasceve*, to his intended victory." In another place, Carpenter thus speaks of the learned and conscientious Mr. Gibbs: "This heady enthusiast, having now in his own head, the head of the universe, was insooth sometimes a member of the university, (for which he did evaporate his grief, and cry out in the pangs of his inward remorsement before the country), and had been somewhat vexatious to the Protestant ministers in the circle about him. His friends and allies fixed all their eyes, with all their lies, upon him as the Carry Castle, or Behemoth of the country." Another specimen of the style of Carpenter's book will suffice. "Anabaptism," says

Carpenter, "is not exempted from the sacred mysteries that these are set and rooted together as unclean creatures, or Creatures. Lev. xi. 17. *The owl, the cormorant, the great owl.* The little owl resembles the unbaptized child; the great owl is the Anabaptist parent; and Corvus Marinus, the cormorant betwixt them, is the wide-throated preacher that divides the child from the parent, dives into them and swallows their souls."

Baxter and Tombes, at Bewdley.

In 1649 Richard Baxter and John Tombes held a public discussion on baptism at BEWDLEY. Baxter was a personal friend of Tombes, and had introduced him to the church at Bewdley, some three miles from Kidderminster. During their residence in London, Tombes and Baxter had frequently conversed on the subject of infant baptism, and Baxter was then so far shaken in his opinions, that he not only thought and spoke favourably of Baptists, but for some time discontinued the practice of infant baptism. It is needless to say how entirely his mind and conduct were afterwards changed. Some of the most foolish things ever uttered against Baptists came from the lips of Richard Baxter. Tombes had preached a series of sermons at Bewdley on the subject of baptism, which still occupied his thoughts, and some of Mr. Baxter's friends, having walked over to hear them, brought back notes to the "painful preacher" at Kidderminster, urging him to reply in writing to Tombes' arguments. Many letters now passed between the two friends. Baxter says, rather tartly, that Tombes' "doctrine did not prevail, at least, not to his desire. At this the man grew angry; and began to charge it so sharply on their consciences, that the poor people were much troubled. He told them in the pulpit, that let men budge it how they would, it was their hypocrisy that hindered them from receiving the truth." Referring to himself, Baxter says, "I perceived myself in a strait, and that my forbearing ever to preach for infant baptism, or to baptize any, would not serve my turn to

continue my peace." At last Baxter yielded to the request of his friends, and consented to dispute with Tombes in the chapel at Bewdley. They met on the 1st of Jan. 1649, before ten o'clock in the morning. Great crowds of people from Kidderminster and the neighbourhood flocked to hear the two friends dispute on this much-vexed question. Hour after hour sped away, and yet the discussion still continued. It had been some time dark before the debate was brought to a close. During the whole of that wordy war, lasting the greater part of the dull, cold, wintry day, neither combatant had broken his fast, so that physical exhaustion had a good deal to do with the actual termination of the dispute. Both sides claimed the victory; but Wood declares, "That all the scholars then and there present, who knew the way of disputing and managing arguments, did conclude that Tombes got the better of Baxter by far."

Here are a few specimens of Baxter's arguments: "(1) All that are Christ's disciples ordinarily ought to be baptized; but some infants are Christ's disciples, therefore some infants ordinarily ought to be baptized. . . . (21) That doctrine which maketh all infants to be members of the visible kingdom of the devil, is false doctrine; but that doctrine which denieth any infant to be a member of the visible Church, doth make them all members of the visible kingdom of the devil; therefore it is false. . . . (23) If an infant were head of the visible Church, then infants may be members; but Christ, an infant, was head of the Church; therefore, infants may be members."

Here also is one of Baxter's slanders: "My seventh argument is also against another wickedness in their manner of baptizing, which is, their dipping persons naked, as is usual with the modestest of them, as I have heard. Against which I argue thus: If it be a breach of the seventh commandment (Thou shalt not commit adultery) ordinarily to baptize naked, then it is an intolerable wickedness, and not God's command-

ment; but it is a breach of the seventh commandment ordinarily to baptize naked; therefore it is intolerable wickedness, and not God's commandment." The remarks he makes, in his published account of the controversy, about his old friend and neighbour's loss of modesty, in baptizing people naked, &c. &c., were scarcely, one would think, uttered to his face. They are the afterthoughts of bitterness, originating in his conscious defeat. It can hardly be supposed, by the most credulous believer in Baxter, that Baxter really accepted this popular calumny against the Baptists, which *Gangræna* Edwards did his very best to circulate.

Many other public disputes took place during this period, of which we have only the briefest record. Kiffin, Knollys, Pendarvis, and many other Baptist worthies, both in London and the country, entered the lists in defence of their opinions. The latter minister, the founder of the church at Abingdon, from his celebrity and success provoked Dr. Jasper Mayne, of Christ's Church, Oxford, who resided at Pyxton, near Watlington, to oppose him on the subject of baptism. A public dispute was accordingly held between Pendarvis and Dr. Mayne in the parish church at Watlington. "There was present," says Wood, "an innumerable company of people on each side; but through the scum of the people, and the party of Anabaptists who backed Pendarvis, behaving themselves insolently, the dispute came to nothing." Wood adds, that the Baptists printed this dispute to their own advantage; but both statements must be received with caution, considering the *animus* of the writer.

Tombès, with Vaughan and Cragge, at Abergavenny.

A more notable dispute took place in the same year (1653). Tombes, who was then vicar of Leominster, was again the Baptist champion; Henry Vaughan, called by his contemporaries, "The Silurist," and John Cragge, were his opponents. The discussion was held in St. Mary's Church, Abergavenny.

The writer, who records the discussion, speaks in no very complimentary terms of the Baptists. "They inveigled the poor, and simple people especially." "Women, and *inferior* tradesmen, which in seven years can scarce learn the mystery of the *lowest* profession, think half seven years enough (gained from their worldly employments), to understand the mysteries of divinity, and whereupon meddle with controversy, *which they have no more capacity to pry into than a bat to look into the third heaven!*" The writer also gives us *his* version of the public discussions of Tombes elsewhere. "The disputes at Bewdley, Hereford, and Ross,* have been successful to astonishment; and in this last, at Abergavenny (though tumultuary, and on a sudden), hath appeared the finger of God. He hath, with spittle and clay, opened the eyes of the blind, overthrown the walls of Jericho with the sound of ram's horns; with these weak means hath wrought strong effects, that no creature may glory in an arm of flesh."

There are two accounts of the origin of Tombes' visit to Abergavenny. One is that he had been importuned, for several months together, to come into Wales "and water what Miles Prosser and others had planted." Another account states that his object in coming was to confirm a child lately baptized in London. The first seems the more probable explanation. "When he entered the pulpit," says the reporter, whom we quote, "great expectation was what mountains would bring forth." His text was Mark xvi. 6—"Whence he concluded, that infant baptism was a nullity, a mockery; no baptism but dipping or plunging was lawful; all that would be saved must be re-baptized, or baptized after profession; that there was no such thing as infant baptism in primitive times, but that it came in with other corruptions, upon unsound grounds; and challenged the whole congregation to speak, if they had anything to say on the controversy." A great excitement was thereupon created. Some of the people were offended.

* With Mr. Tirer and Mr. Smith.

Others were "staggered or scrupled; and some, not knowing what to think of their own, their children's, or their ancestors' salvation." Many "well-learned" heard Mr. Tombes, and heard with amazement. Among them were Vaughan, "schoolmaster of the town, formerly fellow of Jesus College, Oxford," and Mr. Bonner, an aged clergyman of the neighbourhood. No one spoke after the service in answer to Tombes' challenge; but Bonner "closed with him on the way to his lodging." Tombes "slighted the grave old man," but promised he would confer with him on the following day." "That night, and especially next morning, the Anabaptists triumphed, saying, Where are your champions now?"

Morning came, but only to redouble the excitement already created in the quiet little Welsh town. Cragge, Vaughan, and Bonner went to the house where Tombes was staying; but the crowd which followed them surged into the house, filled the street, and prevented any discussion. It was, however, agreed that a public debate should be held in the parish church at one o'clock.

At that hour the ancient and spacious church of St. Mary's was crowded. Tombes took the pulpit, with his friend Mr. Abbetts, a resident Baptist minister; his three opponents fixed themselves in a seat hard by. Bonner was "preparing to give the onset," when some gentleman near dissuaded him, "lest in his aged and feeble state he should impair his health." For six long hours the debate continued, without any apparent flagging of the interest.

Vaughan began by urging that infants may be lawfully baptized, since baptism has now taken the place of circumcision, and is the ceremony by which children are admitted into the covenant of grace. He confesses that baptism was anciently practised by plunging. Tombes begs the people to observe this concession of his antagonist; and Vaughan retorts by charging Tombes with his "overuncharitable speech in his sermon," to the effect that "infant baptism was a nullity and

mockery, and concluded them and all their ancestors, even all the Western Church for fifteen hundred years, under damnation." Although "plunging was the ancient way," says Vaughan, "yet the Church has power, upon the sight of inconvenience, of order and decency's sake, to alter the circumstantials and externals of any ordinance. Had she not changed the time of celebrating the Lord's Supper from the evening to the morning?" Vaughan ends by appealing to Tombes to cease to embroil the Church of God, so infinitely torn already, and to submit to the judgment and scarcely interrupted practice of the Western Church for fifteen hundred years.

Cragge, the clergyman of the parish, next enters the lists. He begins by an apology. The task forced upon him is "on a sudden," and finds him "unprovided." Moreover, his antagonist is "an experienced champion." If he (Cragge) should fail in his part, he hopes the cause he has at heart may not suffer. He asks liberty to premeditate, and promises to treat upon the subject of the debate hereafter. Still, "if he were to study the matter in dispute as many hours as Mr. Tombes had studied it days, or days as he had done weeks, or weeks as he had done months, or months as he had done years," the truth was so evidently on his (Cragge's) side "that he could not fear (maugre all opposition) to make it clear. In the meanwhile, trusting to God's assistance (whose cause it was), he would attempt, beginning with his enthymena: 'Some infants may not be baptized, therefore some infants may be baptized.'" Tombes denies this; but Cragge at once replies: "Subcontrary propositions in a contingent matter may be both true. But these (viz., some infants may not be baptized, some infants may be baptized), are subcontrary propositions in a contingent matter; therefore they may be both true."

The narrator of the debate tells us that "Here Mr. Cragge appealed to the judgment of the people!" but what "inferior

tradesmen," who had "no more capacity to pry into" theology "than a bat to look up into the third heaven," knew about "sub-contrary propositions in contingent matters," is more than he chooses to tell us. He, however, makes abundantly evident that there was in the audience, from the very first, a strong sympathy with their own local champion, and assures us that Tombes would, after Mr. Cragge's appeal to them, have waded into "a large discourse to wind himself out" of his difficulty. Cragge thereupon complains that Tombes, "like a lapwing, is carrying the hearers far from the matter in dispute;" and Cragge's remark smacking of tartness, a certain "C. P.," a local apothecary, who had already interposed, spoke out, and got snubbed for his pains, a "gentleman of authority telling him that it was not fit for a man of his place and calling to speak!" "C. P." took his snubbing meekly, and remained silent the rest of the debate.

Tombes method of expounding the passages he quoted did not please some of the audience, and they cried out that he was wasting time. "A learned gentleman" also had his fling at Tombes, evidently a soldier, from his similes: "This is but to spend time in parleying, that you may avoid the gunshot; for you are afraid of the great thunderbolt that is behind."

Cragge now quotes Ambrose's saying, "That he who baptized all nations, excepted none, not even infants;" but, shocking to say, Tombes "pished at it, and slighted Ambrose's authority," to the great scandal of the Abergavenny folk. Here was an opportunity for an appeal to the "inferior tradesmen" which even Cragge could not resist; and hence he cries, "Whether will you obey Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, *and the Scriptures*, or Mr. Tombes, vicar of Leominster, against the Scriptures, judge ye!" The applause which greeted this appeal showed that the questioner had rightly gauged his audience.

According to the account of the debate, from which we have

quoted, evidently written by a bitter hater of Baptists, and no friend of Tombes, the Leominster vicar, who set himself above Ambrose, "would now have broken through the pales to rove abroad again; but he was pressed to keep within the lists." He still denied "that children were holy," or "in the covenant;" and so "gave but little satisfaction to the greatest part of the hearers." Nay, he was even "nettled, as if something in Cragge's argument had galled him." "Children *are* holy," retorts Cragge: "you do not like that saying, because it cuts the throat of your tenet." "Nay," replies Tombes; "it does not so much as touch its skin."

Here a voice from under the pulpit shouted to Tombes, "You answer nothing at all; but shift and deny all." Tombes, stooping down, looks at the man, and says, "Thou art an impudent, brazen-faced fellow, whosoever thou art. I have answered all; confuted all my adversaries' books; and amongst them one of my greatest adversaries. I have turned Mr. Richard Baxter the most of his argument."

"A little while after this, Mr. Tombes, looking upon his watch, said, 'I am weary of this pedantry. I promised but one hour, and it is four hours.' With that he clapped his book together. 'Good Mr. Tombes,' said an Anabaptist, 'continue a little longer for the satisfaction of the people.' He gave no answer; but put on his hat."

The reason of Tombes' chagrin is patent enough. Cragge's congregation backed up their minister, even where they could not understand him; and Tombes accordingly said, when leaving the church, that he would have no further dispute with him, except by writing. The following Sunday Mr. Cragge, at the request of his many sympathisers, preached from the same text as Mr. Tombes, and no doubt abundantly satisfied the people who had been "staggered," or "offended," and "grieved," by the eloquent Baptist. Tombes was now safely out of the way at Leominster, and peace was once more restored to the quiet little town on the Usk.

Denne and Gunning, in London.

Five years after the Abergavenny dispute, a still more famous discussion took place in London. Its origin was this: some gentlewoman in the metropolis, having become a Christian, was in great trouble about the lawfulness or unlawfulness of infant baptism. In order to remove her doubts, Mr. Henry Denne, the indefatigable General Baptist minister, and Dr. Gunning, afterwards Bishop of Chichester, agreed to discuss the subject in public, and St. Clement Dane's Church, London, "without Temple Bar," was selected as the place in which the discussion should be held. Thousands of people were attracted to listen. The dispute began on the 19th November, 1658, and was renewed on the 26th of the same month.

On the first day, Henry Denne occupied the pulpit, Dr. Gunning fixing himself in a gallery opposite. Entreating the multitude to be silent, and behave themselves civilly and orderly, Mr. Denne thus began: "One there is, who desireth to be informed whether the baptism of infants be lawful or unlawful. I declare that the baptism of infants is unlawful." To this Dr. Gunning replies, from his seat in the gallery, "I will prove the baptism of infants to be lawful. Thus: that which the Supreme Lawgiver of the Church hath given in command to His immediate officers of the Church, by a perpetual sanction and unalterable decree, to be by them practised, is lawful. But the baptism of infants is, by the Supreme Lawgiver of the Church given in command to His immediate officers, by a perpetual sanction and unalterable decree, to be by them and their successors practised. Therefore, the baptism of infants is lawful." Denne "denies the minor;" whereupon Gunning adds, that "it is Christ's will that infants should be saved, and that, as they cannot be saved without baptism, or desire for baptism, in their parents or friends, therefore it is Christ's will and command that they should

be baptized." Denne readily grants the first part of Gunning's assertion, "that Christ will have infants to be saved;" but altogether demurs to Gunning's statement, "that baptism is the condition of salvation, and therefore lawful." The future bishop now quotes John iii. 4, and urges that, "to be born again of water, is baptism."

Denne's reply is very shrewd. "The place of Scripture you have brought is allegorical," said Denne; "and therefore not so proper to be a ground of faith. Against this gloss, or explanation, three things may be urged: (1) That Scripture must be considered to whom and of whom, they speak; and not to be applied to any other concerning whom it doth not speak. This Scripture (John iii. 4) is addressed to Nicodemus, seeking to learn the way of God, and is neither spoken of children, nor to children. (2) By being born again of water is not meant baptism, but a mystical, and not literal water. (3) If it were granted that the text *did* include children, and that by water baptism were intended, yet it will not follow that children cannot be saved without baptism, because here is only mention made of entering into the kingdom of God. You know the kingdom of God hath manifold exceptions [meanings] in the Scriptures; sometimes it is taken for Gospel preaching, sometimes for a visible church, sometimes for that happiness which men and women (not infants) do enter through believing."

The dispute next turns upon whether the Greek words in the commission are intended to include "children" as well as men and women, Gunning, of course, contending that they do, and Denne quoting passages to show that they do not. "Have you a Greek Testament?" asked Gunning, with a sneer. Denne, who can quote Greek as readily as the doctor, passes over the sneer, and refers to the passage quoted. A further contention arises as to whether Tertullian or Justin Martyr was the first to mention infant baptism, and Gunning "appeals to the Christian auditors" with something of a triumphant flourish.

Gunning's second argument in favour of infant baptism is the following:—"That which is no sin for parents to require, and for ministers to perform, being required, is lawful. But it is no sin for parents to require baptism for their infants, neither for ministers to perform it, being required. Therefore, the baptism of infants is lawful." Of course, Denne again "denies the minor," and contends that "it is a sin;" to which Gunning rejoins, "that being confirmed by an everlasting law, and standing commission, not to be altered to the end of the world, it is no sin."

Then follows a bit of word-quibbling on "the commission;" Gunning thinking he had his opponent on the hip, because he spoke of "children being unwilling," whereas, "it is impossible that they should be unwilling, seeing they know not anything of the matter; and Denne replying, with some sharpness, "You might have spared this labour, for I did not say that children were unwilling, but I said that they were *not* willing. There is a vast difference between the two. You know, for example, how willing Constantius Copronymus was to be baptized when he was an infant, and how he came to have the name Copronymus. I forbear to tell the story before this audience; but come, point me a syllogism out of the words of the 'commission.'" "The Apostles are commanded to make disciples of all nations," replies Gunning. "Now infants, who are part of the nations, cannot be made disciples in any other way than by baptism; therefore, they are here commanded to make disciples by baptism." Gunning further contends that infants are "called," "predestinated," "God's servants," "given to Christ by the Father," and were therefore properly regarded as "Church members;" but Denne, holding Arminian views, objects *in toto* to his statements.

The doctor now quotes Austin's opinion, namely, that the baptism of infants was held by the Church from apostolic times, and that he (Gunning) is prepared to prove this, "by several testimonies from the Ancients." But Denne rejoins,

that although that might be Austin's opinion, Erasmus, "who laboured much in Austin, and Ludovicus Vives, who was very skilled in his doctrine," were neither of them convinced by his opinion, and both believed the contrary to be true of the early churches. "Moreover," adds Denne, "you know what I have already told you out of Tertullian and Gregory Nazianzen. I think it needless to repeat the same things again."

After much debate, in which the former arguments were again repeated by both opponents, the first day's discussion ended, they mutually agreeing to meet on that day week.

The two opponents on the second day changed places—Gunning is the respondent, and Denne the opponent. It is not stated, however, whether Gunning now occupied the pulpit and Denne the seat in the gallery opposite. Gunning leads off in precisely the same manner as Denne had previously done, and Denne opposes. "One desires," says the doctor, "to be informed touching the baptism of infants, whether it be lawful, or unlawful. I affirm the baptism of infants to be lawful." "And I will prove," rojoined Denne, "the baptism of infants to be unlawful. If the baptism of infants be lawful, it is either from some reason delivered by you, or some other; but *not* by any reason delivered by you, or any other; therefore, the baptism of infants is not lawful." He argues that it is neither supported by tradition nor Scripture; and as Denne pours out text upon text in support of the last statement, Gunning loses his self-control, and after telling Denne that "he (Gunning) does not carry a Concordance in his head," asks him, "whether he (Denne) *knows what is the Ethiopic word to "teach."*

A closer wrestling ensues from this point. Gunning affirms that "infants who are unbaptized are shut out of heaven;" and Denne retorts, "that, if they are, then God punishes some creatures for that which they cannot help;" but that this is contrary to the Divine conduct, and "therefore unbaptized infants are *not* shut out of heaven." With some heat, Gunning in-

stantly exclaims, "I deny the consequence;" to which, as warmly, Denne replies, "Then shutting out of heaven is no punishment."

This appeared a bold statement, and greatly startled some of the vast assembly who were listening to the word-wrangling with breathless attention. "Bear witness! bear witness!" some eagerly cried out; "he saith, 'It is no punishment to be shut out of heaven.'" Others affirmed, "That he plainly in so many syllables had said so, as they were ready to witness."

Gunning appears not to have taken notice of this reply, or of the clamour it raised, and goes on to say, "That as the potter hath power over the clay, to use it at his pleasure, so God might do what He would with His own." Denne's reply is cautious, and was repeated three or four times, without the least notice being taken of it by his opponent. "I do not say," said Denne, "what God may, or may not do, but what He doth. Now, we know that God cannot do contrary to His oath; but to punish creatures for what they cannot help, is contrary to His oath; therefore, God cannot do it. Moreover, this I argue: If God punish creatures for that they cannot help, then He doth not leave all the world without excuse. But He will leave all the world without excuse; therefore, He will not punish any creature for that which he cannot help."

Not only did not Gunning give any answer to this argument, but he now began loudly to complain of "the injury that was being done to him by the disorder of the auditors." Denne also confessed his sorrow at the uproar, but protested that it was altogether without his approbation." "He had still," said Denne, "many other things to propound, but the time allotted to the dispute was spent, and his own infirmities began to press upon him, and he should therefore cease."

The upshot of the debate was, that five days after, the lady, at whose instance the discussion began, was publicly immersed. The day, we are told, "was cold and sharp, and it seemed strange that a gentlewoman should endure, at that season of

the year, and in such weather, to go into the water and be dipt all over;" but as "fantastical ladies have a proverb, 'Pride feels no cold,' so it may be said of faith and zeal: they also feel no cold."

As to the general result of the debate, "the success was estimated according to the different affections, rather than the judgments of some men and women." The writer closes his account by a fact which is recorded for the special benefit of the Vicar of Kidderminster, who had declared that baptism by immersion was not much better than murder, since it was frequently attended with great bodily risk. "I can show Mr. Baxter, an old man in London, *who hath laboured in the Lord's pool many years*, converted by his ministry (as an instrument in the hand of the Lord) more men and women than Mr. Baxter hath in all his parish. Yet, when he hath laboured a greater part of the day in preaching and reasoning, his refection hath been, *not a sack-posset or cawdle*, but to go into the water and baptize converts." The inference intended to be conveyed by this circumstance is too obvious to need statement; but we greatly question whether there are many who would now endorse that inference.

The Portsmouth Debate

demands more than a passing notice, since it was the last public disputation of any consequence on the subject of baptism in England. It arose out of these circumstances: Mr. Samuel Chandler, a Presbyterian minister of Fareham, established a fortnightly lecture in the town of Portsmouth. Following out a certain plan of his own, he was led to treat on the subject of "Sacraments," and uttered some harsh things in the course of this discussion against the principles and practices of the Baptists. A gentleman, not a Baptist, who attended these lectures, took them down in short-hand, and showed them to several of his friends, amongst others, to Mr. Thomas Bowes, the General Baptist minister of the town. Mr. Bowes thinking the cause

of truth might suffer if these strictures were allowed to pass unnoticed, waited upon his friend, Mr. Webber, the Particular Baptist minister of Gosport. Mr. Webber coinciding with Mr. Bowes' opinion, a number of Baptists attended Mr. Chandler's next lecture, in which he undertook to answer the objections urged by his opponents. At the close of the service, Mr. Bowes stood up before all the congregation, and charged Mr. Chandler with preaching false doctrine, challenged him to meet publicly an ordained minister and discuss the question of baptism. The lecturer at once accepted the challenge, only stipulating that his opponent should be "a man who understood the laws of disputation." The Presbyterians applied to the magistrates of Portsmouth to obtain for them a licence from the King, "publicly to vindicate the common cause of the Reformed churches, and settle the wavering in the belief and practice of those truths which tend very much to the advancement of early piety and religion." The licence was granted, and both parties looked out for the ablest champions. At first the Baptists thought of Mr. Matthew Caffyn, but being suspected of heresy, he was passed over. They next turned their eyes to William Russell, M.D., the well-known General Baptist minister of London, and procured his consent to defend their cause. With Dr. Russell, in the position of "junior counsel" and "moderator," were Mr. John Williams, of East Knowle, and Mr. John Sharpe, of Frome, both Particular Baptist ministers. The Presbyterians selected Mr. Samuel Chandler, the lecturer, whose words had given such offence; Mr. Leigh, of Newport; and Mr. Robinson, of Hungerford, the last gentleman acting as moderator for their party.

The day agreed upon for the disputation was February the 22nd, 1698-9; and the place, the Presbyterian Meeting-house, High Street, Portsmouth. The assembly was worthy of the debate. The governor and the lieutenant-governor were present, the mayor, and the magistrates of Portsmouth. A large and well-to-do class of people filled the chapel, and, as one

authority tells us, the military and the civil power attended, at the command of the King, to preserve peace and good order. The debate began between nine and ten in the morning, and continued without cessation for nine hours.

Mr. Chandler commenced by delivering a "Prologue," and repeating the questions to be disputed, namely, "(1) Whether, according to the commission of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, adult believers are only the proper subjects of baptism, and not infants? (2) Whether the ordinance of baptism, as appointed by Christ, is to be administered by dipping, plunging, or overwhelming only, and not otherwise? They affirm, and we deny."

Dr. Russell, after a few preliminary questions and answers, leads off the debate. He affirms that Christ nowhere requires any of His ministers to baptize infants, and therefore the baptism of infants is not according to His commission. Mr. Chandler replies, "If you will allow good consequences drawn from Scripture, I will deny your minor." "Then you must suppose that Christ hath required some of His ministers to baptize infants," said Dr. Russell. Mr. Chandler answers, "We distinguish between consequential truths and express words." "So do we," answers Dr. Russell; "but I hope our Lord's commission about holy baptism is delivered in express words, and not in consequentials. The term in my argument is very lax; I do not say there 'command,' but '*required;*' and if you prove the baptism of infants anywhere 'required' by Christ, it is sufficient."

Mr. Leigh here interposes to ask if the doughty champion of the Baptists "will allow good Scripture consequences in the case, or whether he expects plain Scripture words?" "If you can prove it *without* an express command, prove, that is, that Christ 'required' it, that will suffice;" but, adds the doctor, "you must remember that you are to prove it according to Christ's commission (for those are the terms of the question), and I believe you will find it a difficult task to do

that by consequence." "What! from the commission?" asked Chandler in amazement; whereupon the Presbyterian moderator, Mr. Robinson, declares that Dr. Russell must prove his position by a universal negative. Nothing loth, the doctor asks that Mr. Chandler should deny some part of his argument, a thing he had not yet prevailed upon him to do, and presently says: "If the requiring of infant baptism be anywhere recorded in Holy Scripture, either Mr. Chandler, or some other person, is able to shew it. But neither Mr. Chandler, nor any other person whatsoever, is able to shew it; therefore, it is not anywhere so recorded in Holy Scripture." Mr. Chandler, being thus pinned in a corner, seeks to escape by "denying Dr. Russell's minor;" upon which the doctor appeals to the Presbyterian moderator, that he (the moderator) had asked for "an universal negative," that one had now been given, and that Mr. Chandler was therefore bound, in all fairness, to give a single instance where it was so written that infants should be baptized. Conscious of his own mistake, the moderator replies: "Suppose Mr. Chandler cannot give an instance, nor anybody in the company, you cannot thence infer that none in the world can." But this evasive answer calls for a biting reply from Dr. Russell. "What is this," said he, "but in effect to give away your cause, when so many men of parts and learning are here present? If you all refuse to give a single instance, the people will think that you have none to give."

The doctor, begging the audience to notice that his *first* argument stands until the instance asked for is given, now marshals his second, which is as follows: "If infants are not capable of being made disciples of Christ by the ministry of men, then they cannot possibly be the subjects of baptism intended in Christ's commission; but infants are not capable to be made disciples of Christ by the ministry of men; therefore they cannot possibly be subjects of baptism intended in Christ's commission." A dispute at once followed as to whether Dr.

Russell meant by "making disciples," "actual and complete disciples," Mr. Leigh urging, "I thus distinguish: infants may be entered into the church in order for learning, &c., and they are disciples before baptism; yet, in a more visible sense, they are made disciples by baptism." This does not satisfy Dr. Russell: "infants have, as infants, no knowledge of good and evil, and therefore they are not capable, while they are infants, to be made disciples by the ministry of men." Chandler here complains that Russell "tricks all this while; that what he (Chandler) means by infants being disciples, is their being solemnly invested by baptism;" but Russell declares he is discussing "pre-requisites for baptism," and was not speaking of "investiture." A second time the debate falls into a dispute about "complete" discipleship; and Chandler, confessing that infants were not, as infants, capable of that, Russell claims to have maintained his second argument. "It is now, therefore, high time that I descended to a new one."

The "new argument" should be specially observed, from the shuffling method by which Mr. Leigh sought to meet it. "If the Apostle Paul did declare all the counsel of God, and kept back nothing that was profitable for the Church of God, and yet did never declare the baptism of infants to be a Gospel institution, according to Christ's commission, then it is no Gospel institution, nor any part of the counsel of God, nor profitable for the Church of God; but the Apostle Paul did declare all the counsel of God, and kept back nothing that was profitable for the Church of God; and yet did never declare the baptism of infants to be a Gospel institution, according to Christ's commission; therefore it is no Gospel institution, nor any part of the counsel of God, nor profitable for the Church of God." Mr. Leigh's method of replying to this argument is, by suggesting that Paul wrote divers Epistles upon many subjects; *that evidently some leaves were cut off from one of his Epistles, that to the Ephesians;* and that, for anything that Dr. Russell might know to the contrary, Paul might have advocated

infant baptism in one or other of these missing leaves! The doctor replies to Mr. Leigh's miserable shift by asking him pointedly if he believes, with the Assembly of Divines, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule to direct us in matters of worship; and by demanding that Mr. Leigh, or some of his friends, *should produce these six missing leaves of the Epistle of Paul* (of which he had never before heard), and prove that they were *really* written by Paul; and then, if such a thing as infant baptism were contained in any of them, he would allow it. "Hereupon Mr. Leigh was angry;" and no wonder. He still, however, reiterated his statement in another form. "Paul's writings are not the hundredth part of what Paul preached; we cannot suppose that in these six chapters to the Ephesians, he could contrive to put down the whole of his preaching in them." Here Dr. Russell sarcastically twits Leigh with favouring the Popish notion of the value of tradition, in his talk about "Paul's sermons, not written." "I have heard," he says, "of some unwritten traditions that are locked up in the Pope's breast, to be delivered out as he finds occasion to serve a turn; *but I never knew that the Presbyterians were ever entrusted with any such treasure!*"

Triumphing over his opponents in his third argument, Dr. Russell now adduces his fourth: "Christ's commission doth show who are to be baptized; but it doth not show that infants are to be baptized; therefore infants are not the subjects of baptism, according to Christ's commission." Mr. Leigh objects; again cites his former statement, that children are included in the term "all nations;" and a second time repeats the opinion, that there is no necessity for persons to be disciples, in the doctor's sense, before they are baptized. Then Dr. Russell, a little piqued by the stale repetition, replies, "I will read my Master's commission;" and forthwith slowly reads Matthew xxviii. 19.

Here the Presbyterian moderator "bawls very loud, saying,

Mr. Williams, will you suffer him to preach?" But the doctor is not to be put down by clamour, nor yet by the insinuation that he is going to preach Arminian doctrine, and so offend his Calvinistic colleague Mr. Williams. "What," said Dr. Russell to the Presbyterian moderator, "do you talk of preaching? Are you afraid of the commission? Are you not in danger of earning Tertullian's reproach of one of the Fathers, that he was *Lucifugæ Scripturarum, &c.*, flying from the light of the Scriptures, as bats from the light of the sun?" and declares that if his opponents (who are sticklers for the *Institutes* of the Genevan Reformer) should oppose what he (Dr. Russell) had said, they would at the same time oppose Calvin himself, who had not only declared that there was no mention made of infants in the commission, but had further said, that we might as well apply these words to little infants: "If any will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thess. iii. 10), and so keep them from food until they starve!

This apt quotation from Calvin displeased the Presbyterian moderator, who asked, in querulous tones, "What have we to do with what Mr. Calvin says?" To which the doctor slily rejoins, "I did not know but you might have had a veneration for Mr. Calvin; but seeing it is otherwise, I will thus argue from the commission:" and then proceeds to give his own view of it. A squabble presently arises between Mr. Leigh and the moderator of his party; and Dr. Russell thinks that the two had better change places, Mr. Leigh become moderator and Mr. Robinson disputant. After this escapade on the moderator's part (who seems to have been very unfit for his responsible post), the wordy war proceeds, Russell affirming, Leigh denying, now in one way now in another, that the commission only warrants the baptism of believers.

Mr. Leigh touches by-and-by upon dangerous ground. He argues that "if believing be previous to baptism, it must be necessary to salvation; and so you must say, that all not believing are damned; and so all infants are damned." Russell

declares that this is a *non sequitur*, as he has already shown that infants are not at all intended in the commission; "but," he solemnly adds, "as touching infants, I am far from believing that God hath decreed them, as such, to eternal damnation. *I will rather believe that all infants, dying in their infancy, are elected*"—(a great stretch of belief for this valiant General Baptist)—"*than conclude that any of them were damned.*" He asks, moreover, that as he has so freely expressed *his* opinion upon this subject of infant salvation, the Presbyterians should be equally outspoken concerning their opinions on the same subject. But he asks in vain.

Mr. Williams next suggests Erasmus' reading of the commission—"Go, teach all nations, and when they have learned, *dip* them;" but the Presbyterian moderator again forgets his duties, and appeals to the audience: "You see, sirs, this gentleman grounds his opinion upon the authority of Erasmus;" "who is well known to have been between a Papist and a Protestant," chimes in Mr. Leigh. But both Russell and Williams argue that, whatever his opinions, Erasmus was a man not to be despised for his skill about the etymology of a Greek word; that it was his judgment, as one of the best scholars of his time, and not his authority, that led to his being quoted; "but," says Russell, with some exhibition of temper, "anything serves your turn at a pinch."

Mr. Leigh again makes an unfortunate slip, which Dr. Russell, as a controversialist, quickly takes up, and makes merry over,—namely, in speaking about eunuchs and "*the eunuchs' children.*" Russell at once recollects an amusing story of another Presbyterian minister who had made the same blunder, and cannot forbear telling it with the evident gusto of an "M.D. of the famous University of Cambridge."

Mr. Williams, "the junior counsel," now relieves Dr. Russell of the leading part in the debate. He (Mr. Williams) argues, that since infants are incapable of denying themselves for Christ, they are incapable of being made disciples of Christ.

Of course Mr. Leigh, who has been left by Mr. Chandler to do the hardest part of the work, objects to this, and asks "if infants are not as capable of believing in Christ, as of coming to Christ; and yet they were said to come when their parents brought them." Mr. Williams denies that the parents' faith was imputed to the children, as Mr. Leigh suggests. Again a rather dangerous concession was made by the leading Presbyterian disputant; Mr. Leigh said, in effect, that infant baptism might be practised in the apostolic or early times, though no instance was recorded in the New Testament. At this Dr. Russell wakens up again, and asks if he (Leigh) will grant that no case is recorded in the New Testament? "We will *suppose* it," he replies, "but not *grant* it." "O yes," adds the doctor, "you *suppose* it because you cannot *prove* it; for you are not so free of your concessions." This stirs up Mr. Leigh's anger, and he replies, with tartness, "It is not recorded in the New Testament what *you* practice; namely, that grown children of believers were baptized. I challenge you to give one instance of any one, born of believing parents, baptized at age." Dr. Russell here repeats his former challenge, for a single instance in the New Testament of any one infant that was ever baptized; and as Mr. Leigh presses for an example of a child of believing parents who was baptized, he refers to Constantine, whose mother Helena was a Christian, and declares that he does not recollect a single instance of any one of the Fathers, or eminent bishops of the Church during the first five hundred years of the Christian era, who were baptized until they were between twenty and thirty years of age; and if any of his opponents know an instance to the contrary, he shall be glad if they will quote it. "What do you tell us of Fathers?" asks Mr. Leigh: "we are not bound to abide by their testimony." "Well then," asks Mr. Williams, "was not the mother of our Lord a believer when Christ was born?" Mr. Leigh is angry that such a question should be asked; and declares, with some exhibition of impatience, "that everybody knows that she

was." "But do *you* believe it?" rejoins Mr. Williams, following up the advantage he had gained by this adroit question. "Yes, I do believe it: what then?" "Then, this," replies Mr. Williams, "here is an instance for you, from Scripture, of a child-believer, that was a believer before he was born; and yet he was not baptized till he came to years; and this we can prove."

A general titter ran through the crowded assembly at the skilful manner in which Mr. Leigh was caught; and Mr. Leigh grew pale and troubled, as a man might be expected to do under such uncomfortable circumstances; but he presently recovered his self-possession, and replied, "Our discourse was grounded on the commission; now was this *before* the commission, or *after* it?"—a skilful parry, but losing its effect through coming rather as an after-thought than as a prompt and instantaneous reply. Of course Dr. Russell now came to the rescue of his "junior," showed that Mr. Leigh was mistaken, and that he really had received "a pertinent answer already, every way suitable to his question." There must have been a little more laughter among the audience at this point, since Mr. Leigh "made no reply." He is nothing daunted, however; and proceeds to show that, in his judgment, "infants are visible Church members," the proof-passage being the words of Christ, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Mr. Williams' reply to this is, that infants are neither members of the universal Church, nor yet of a particularly constituted Church, and therefore they are not members of the visible Church at all. His opponent does not notice his argument, but again declares that infants are part of a nation, and therefore might be baptized. Mr. Williams answers, "Though children are part of a nation, yet not of the nation modified by Christ's commission."

Upon this the Presbyterian moderator rather rudely calls the attention of the audience to the fact that Mr. Williams "has no academical learning;" Mr. Williams rejoins with a touch

of sarcasm, "I am warned by that word to have a care of vain philosophy;" and at once asked "what was the antecedent to the relative *them* in the commission?" The moderator now found it wiser to be silent; but both Dr. Russell and Mr. Williams answered for him, "all nations discipled." They both again ask for a single instance of infant baptism from the Word of God; and no reply being forthcoming, Dr. Russell said: "If infants are capable to be made disciples of Christ by the ministry of men, *without the use of reason*, then the beasts of the field are also capable; but the beasts of the field are not capable; therefore infants are not capable."

This reply greatly agitated the irritable Presbyterian moderator. "He stood up and threw himself about, making a noise like one in a delirious paroxysm, and bade the people take notice that Dr. Russell had ranked their infants among the brute beasts; and that, if they became of his opinion, they must look upon them as dogs, or cats, or hogs, &c., with much more of the same sort of rhetoric, endeavouring all he could to enrage the multitude of unthinking persons against him, and put the people into confusion." "Hold, hold," cries Dr. Russell. "Mr. Robinson, I have already told you how great an esteem I have for your little infants. . . . I now bring this illustration to show the absurdity of your opinions: Suppose there were twenty or thirty new-born infants in a room, and you should choose out the most able and learned persons amongst you to preach to them, in order to make them disciples, according to Christ's commission, I believe he would have no better success than St. Anthony had, as the story goes, when he took upon him to instruct the pigs; or, as some others have done, even Popish saints, who have taken upon them to preach to the fowls of the air," &c. His remark about the beasts, is, after all, he says, not such an out-of-the-way "conceit," since the Romish Church baptizes bells, which are certainly passive in their baptism, and on that account, says Augustine, "the fittest subjects, since children show their

resistance by crying!" "And now," said he, "I demand of *any* of you to take off the retortion, and show the disparity if you can."

A general silence ensues, which is at length broken by the undaunted Mr. Leigh, who exclaims, "It is time to proceed to the other question: whether the ordinance of baptism, as appointed by Christ, is to be administered by dipping, plunging, or overwhelming only, and not otherwise." Dr. Russell meets this by saying: "The Holy Scriptures shows us the right way of baptizing as appointed by Christ, but it doth not show us that it ought to be done by sprinkling; therefore sprinkling is not the right way of baptizing." This did not satisfy Mr. Leigh, who at once exclaimed, "Sir, you must bring in that dipping is absolutely necessary: what do you talk of sprinkling for?" Here is another opportunity for a smart retort, and Dr. Russell could not resist it: "I hope you are not ashamed of your practice; but if you will disown sprinkling to be the right way of baptizing, I am contented. I will not then insist upon it." Mr. Robinson, the moderator, felt the force of this retort; and as Mr. Leigh was silent, Mr. Robinson said: "We are not discoursing upon that now; you are to prove dipping to be the only way; and *you must and shall prove it*." "Must and shall," replied Dr. Russell; "must and shall is for the king, and not for Mr. Robinson."

The debate next turns upon the meaning of the Greek word translated "baptize," and Mr. Chandler, who had been silent during the greater part of the day, now opens his lips. He confesses that *baptizo* means to dip, but it means also "to wash;" and declares that there is great probability that many in the Scripture times were baptized by pouring a little water on the face. Dr. Russell meets his new antagonist by quoting "what Astedius saith in his *Lexicon Theologicum*," showing that it was only in a secondary and remote sense that the word *baptizo* can mean "to wash;" and quotes, in confutation of the other part of Chandler's statement, the baptism of Christ

by John, and the Eunuch by Peter, where both administrator and "person baptized" went into the water.

A good deal of "confused jangling and noise" followed Russell's reply, when a new opponent suddenly starts up, a Presbyterian minister, who thinks "that there had been little said to purpose;" whereupon Russell at once says that, on the contrary, he thinks a good deal has been said to the purpose, and more than his opponents have answered. "But," said he, looking the new combatant full in the face, "if *you* are not satisfied, we will waive all that hath been said, and I will dispute it over with you, *de novo*." The Presbyterian minister shrugged his shoulders at this unexpected challenge, declared, that "he did not feel very well;" and, in fact, declined to pick up the gauntlet.

The debate came to an end between six and seven o'clock. Mr. Leigh returned thanks to the governor and mayor for their civility, which the Baptists very promptly endorsed. A brief prayer was offered by Mr. Leigh, and the assembly were dismissed.

Two "scribes" were employed to take short-hand notes of the debate; but when the Baptist "scribe" went to the Presbyterian "scribe" in order to compare notes with a view to publication, the Presbyterian declined; pleaded that he had never before been engaged in such work, and that his account was very imperfect. Nor did any one of the Baptists afterwards "procure so much as a sight of his copy." Nevertheless, three days after the debate, the following advertisement appeared in the *Postman* newspaper:—"Portsmouth, Feb. 23.—Yesterday the dispute between the Presbyterians and the Anabaptists was held in the Presbyterian meeting-house. It began at ten o'clock in the morning, and continued till six in the afternoon, without intermission. The theme of the dispute was, the subject of baptism, and the manner in which it is to be performed. Russell and Williams were the opponents for the Anabaptists, and Mr. Chandler and Mr. Leigh for the

Presbyterians; Mr. Sharpe was moderator for the former, and Mr. Robinson for the latter. Mr. Russell opposed infant baptism with all the subtility and sophistry of the schools; and it was answered with good reason and learning. *Upon the whole, it was the opinion of all the judicious auditory, the Presbyterians sufficiently defended their doctrines, and also worsted their adversaries*, when they came to assume the place of opponents."

It afterwards appeared that Colonel John Gibson, the Lieutenant-Governor of Portsmouth, was the author of this paragraph; and, from Mr. Chandler's asking his permission in the following June to print it, with the endorsement, "that he was still of the same opinion," it is not unfair to suppose that Mr. Chandler "inspired" the writer himself.

Another and fuller account appeared in the *Flying Post* in April, but so unfair and one-sided that Dr. Russell was provoked to publish the narrative of the debate from which we have quoted. This led to a second version by the Presbyterians a few months later, which was shown by the Baptists to be full of inaccuracies, or, as one writer more stingingly describes them, "of insertions, transpositions, falsifications, and additions."

At the close of his "prologue," Mr. Chandler asked the audience to join him in the prayer, "that God would grant that truth might prevail." We are not told by Mr. Chandler whether he regarded it as an answer to his prayer, that some of "the judicious auditory," notwithstanding Colonel Gibson's opinion, were convinced of the propriety of the Baptists' sentiments, and a few days after the debate were "dipped in water."

A good deal of bitterness on both sides grew out of the debate, and much angry recrimination, little tending to promote Christian fellowship. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at, that the Baptist historians who record the debate itself should all, without exception, rejoice that this was the last of the kind ever held in this country: a sentiment in which every reader will heartily agree.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS AND GENERAL ASSEMBLIES.

THERE is some obscurity hanging over the origin of Local Associations. That they sprang up during the time of the Commonwealth, and that they rapidly multiplied when once the idea was broached, are facts abundantly attested; but which Association can rightly claim to be the first, there is no small difficulty in determining. The *Confession of the Seven Churches* in London, published in 1644, hints at the idea of association in the forty-seventh article: "Although the particular congregations be distinct and several bodies, every one as a compact and knit city within itself; yet are they all to walk by one rule of truth; so also they, (by all means convenient), *are to have counsel and help one of another*, if necessity require it, as members of one body, in the common faith, under Christ their head." But how far this "counsel and help" led to united action, does not appear. Grantham's declaration, in his *Christianismus Primitivus*, published long after Local Associations and General Assemblies had become common among at least one section of the Baptist denomination, exactly expresses the purpose which was contemplated in establishing them. "The mutual consultation of many churches together, shows not the superiority of churches one above another; but only the brotherly interest which they have in the strength of each other, and the duty which lieth upon the churches one to help another

in their difficulties. And, doubtless, her strength thus united is the most powerful means under heaven (through the virtue of Christ's promise to be with them as His Church), to stop the current of heresy, and to keep the churches in unity both in doctrine and manners."

The special cause which led, some half dozen or more years after the publication of the *Confession of the Seven Churches*, to a general desire for greater union among the Particular Baptists, was the earnest letter received by the London churches from the churches in Ireland. In this letter they say, "that their beloved and faithful brother, John Vernon, the bearer of the letter," will, through God's blessing, "be suddenly with you. . . . His conversation hath been in zeal and faithfulness; the Lord having put it into the hearts of all his congregations in Ireland to have a more revived correspondence with each other by letter and loving epistles, in which practice we found great advantage, not only by weakening Satan's suggestions and jealousies, but it hath brought a closer union and knitting of heart; and, which is not an inferior consideration, we have hereby been enabled feelingly and knowingly to present each other's wants and conditions before our God. In the same manner, we shall be enabled to answer our duty towards you, and you towards us, and so bear each other's burdens, and fulfil the law of Christ in our very near relation. We hereby earnestly request the same brotherly correspondence with you and from you; and, *by your means, with all the rest of the churches in England, Scotland, and Wales*, whom we trust will be provoked to the same things, which we hope may be mutually obtained once in three months." The same letter also asks for "a perfect account of the churches of Christ owned in communion with them;" and offers "one request more, if it hath not been lately practised;" namely, "that they would send two or more faithful brethren, well acquainted with the discipline and order of the Lord's house, able to speak seasonable words, suited to the necessities of the people, to visit,

comfort, and confirm all the flock of our Lord Jesus, that are, or have given up, their names to be under His rule and government in England, Scotland, and Wales."

This letter produced a powerful effect upon the churches in London. After a day of fasting and prayer, they agreed to adopt its suggestions. Inquiries were at once made of the several churches in different parts of the island; but we have no means of ascertaining the result. The letter sent to the Welsh churches has been preserved; and from this we learn, that "the several churches of Christ in London," as the senders describe themselves, were anxious "to obtain a full account of all the churches in England, Scotland, and Wales;" and for the purpose of gathering this information from the Principality, they urge their Welsh churches to visit the several weak and scattered brethren in their part, and near adjacent, that it may be known "what churches and societies they at London may groundedly communicate with."

Although there is no extant record of the result of this correspondence, it is a fair inference, that the churches which mooted the question of union by letter and visits, and set the example of it, speedily adopted other means of periodical association with one another. If only this inference could be established, it would entitle the *London Baptist Association* to claim the foremost place among the many Associations that have since been formed in England, Scotland, and Wales.

The Somerset Association.

In November of the same year (1653) in which the letter from Ireland aroused the churches in London, an Association of Particular Baptist Churches was formed in the West of England. There is little doubt that this union was the result of the circulation of that letter by the London Baptists. The first meeting of the Somerset churches, and the churches of Wilts, Devon, Gloucester, and Dorset, was held at Wells "on the sixth and seventh days of the ninth month." At this meet-

ing one of the subjects of debate was, "Whether laying on of hands on baptized believers was an ordinance of Christ?" The majority agreed that there was no warrant for it, in precept or precedent; that whether it were practised by the churches or not, it should not be made a condition of communion; and that any minister who so contended for it should not be permitted to preach in any of the associated churches. They yet unanimously decided, at the same meeting, that the ordination of both ministers and messengers should not only be preceded by prayer and fasting, but should be accompanied with the imposition of hands. "The circular letter" was signed by Thomas Collier, one of the many Baptist ministers singled out by *Gangræna* Edwards for abuse. "He is a master-secretary," says Edwards, "and a man of great power amongst them. He hath emissaries under him, whom he sends abroad and commands to several parts, as Syms, Rowe, &c., and supply his place in his absence. He hath done much hurt in Lymington, Hampton, Waltham, and all along this country." In other words, Collier was one of the most indefatigable Particular Baptist ministers in the west of England, and zealously fulfilled the office to which he was called—the General Superintendent and Messenger of the Associated Churches.

This first Local Association, of which we have any account, must have regarded its meetings as profitable to the churches generally, since it met again *two months afterwards*. Collier a second time signs "the circular letter." The next meeting was held at Bridgewater, "on the eighteenth day of the second month," in 1655. This Association was chiefly remarkable for its outspoken letter to the Baptist churches in Ireland, who were then receiving State aid, very much to the astonishment of the Baptists in the West of England. "Dear brethren," say they in their fraternal letter, "we desire the Lord to teach you to deny yourselves in this case; and truly we have heard likewise of the great vanity and pride in apparel of some of the brethren in the ministry with you; and whereas, they should

be patterns in humility, meekness, and a good conversation, they are too much patterns of the contrary. These things, dear brethren, have often sounded in our ears (and indeed hath pierced our hearts), not only from enemies, but friends. And indeed we cannot doubt that the large allowance from the State in Ireland hath drawn over many brethren to be preachers there; not but we rejoice in the flourishing of the Gospel in that nation, and could desire that there were more publishers of it; but it would have added to our joy had they come there upon better principles. We desire not to mention particulars in this case; but that we hope is reformation, which will be our joy in the Lord, being that which indeed hath ministered matter of grief and sorrow to our souls." To these rebukes of their friends, the Irish ministers do not appear to have taken much heed. "Our brethren in Ireland," says an entry which follows a copy of the letter in the records of the Association, "did never to this epistle return us any answer; which was our trouble." It is, perhaps, difficult to determine how far the charges of the Somerset Association were correct; but one is disposed to regard some of their strictures as founded on reports too hastily accepted, since in the following year the same Irish brethren wrote to some Welsh churches, warning them "to take heed of the sin of earthly-mindedness," and "to labour after a just, blameless, and shining life."

They also advised them, as they were "now in prosperous times, to prepare for a storm." "Let those that are rich among you strive," they further say, "to be large-hearted to the poor; and so much the more because of the present distress, and because of the great hatred of the world, which saints of our judgment endure. . . . We desire you to follow after enlargement of heart, both in contributions towards the poor and other church uses, and *in the maintenance of them who dispense the Word unto you*, that such dispensers may give themselves wholly to the work, in which duty some of us have observed, on your side of the water, sundry persons, yea, we

fear churches, have come short." It seems scarcely probable that churches who were fairly open to all the rebukes of the Somerset letter would write in this strain to others.

There is one other counsel in this epistle of the Irish ministers to the two Welsh churches in Glamorganshire which is worth noticing. It is a bit of advice about books. "Besides ministerial teaching," says the letter, "we would commend unto you the use of good books;" "and," as if in some doubt as to whether these simple Welsh people would know what "good books" they should "use," they add: "take advice of some goodly preacher what are fit to buy."

The Somerset Particular Baptist Association published a *Confession* in 1656, to which we have referred in a previous chapter. This was first designed, so they tell us, "rather for a trial of their unity in the faith, and for closer fellowship one with another:" but fearing to be confounded with men who held "free-will, and falling from grace" in their neighbourhood (the General Baptists); and wishing to utter their protest against "such as pretend to a light and voice within them, without any relation to Christ and the Scriptures" (the Quakers); they considered that there was "more than ordinary necessity" why they should give publicity to their *Confession*. It substantially agrees with the *Confession of the Seven Churches* or *London Confession*.

This Association was held half-yearly, and continued to meet until 1657, after which time its records cease. But there was no fixed rule as to the intervals at which Local or county Associations are held. Among the General Baptists they met either quarterly, half-yearly, or annually, according to the convenience of the churches associated, the principal town in the district being generally selected as the place of meeting. Almost every part of the country had its General Baptist Association, since this was one of the first steps taken on the formation of even a small number of churches; and where the churches were few and far between, two or three counties held

a common meeting, like the Western Particular Baptist Association just mentioned. The persons entitled to attend were messengers, elders, and brethren. The next Local Association was

The Midland Association.

The Midland Association of Particular Baptist Churches was formed in 1655, at Warwick. A preliminary meeting was held on the third of May, when the pastors and messengers of the following churches agreed upon "*Sixteen Articles of Faith and Order:*" Warwick, Morton, Bourton-on-the-water, Alcester, Tewkesbury, Hook Norton, and Derby. It is supposed that the excellent and devoted minister of Warwick, Rev. Daniel King, was the chief agent in securing the formation of this ancient Association. The articles which had been unanimously agreed upon, were taken back by the pastors to their several churches, to be examined and approved; and on the 26th June of the same year, the Midland Association again met at Moreton-in-the-Marsh. The assembled brethren then formally adopted the *Sixteen Articles*, appending their names on behalf of the churches they represented. In substance these *Articles* agree with the *Confession of the Seven Churches*. After this statement of their basis of union, the Association determined the *objects* of their union. "The churches were to be helpful to each other; *first;* in giving advice, after serious consultation and deliberation, in matters and controversies remaining doubtful to any particular church, according to the plain example of the Churches of Jerusalem and Antioch. (Acts xv. 23, &c.) *Secondly;* in sending their gifted brethren to use their gifts for the edification of the churches that need the same, as they shall see it to be reasonable, as the Church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch. Acts xv. 22. *Thirdly;* in giving and receiving also, in case of the poverty and want of any particular church, as plainly doth appear in the approved and due acting of the Churches of the Gentiles

towards the Church at Jerusalem. Rom. xv. 26. *Fourthly;* in a joint carrying on of any part of the work of the Lord, as is commanded to the churches, as they shall have opportunity to join therein, to the Glory of God. See 2 Cor. viii. 19—23. *Fifthly;* in watching over each other and considering each other for good, in respect of purity of doctrine, exercise of love and good conversation, being all members of the same body of Christ (1 Cor. xii. 12), who, therefore, ought to have care one for another (ver. 25), especially considering how the glory of God is concerned in their standing and holy conversation. The churches now associated are desired to take these things into consideration, and to signify by their messengers, at their next meeting, how far they close with the same, and what they judge expedient to be further considered and done, for the glory of God and the good of the people."

In autumn of the same year the Midland Association again met at Moreton; and the following year three meetings were held; but it appears to have been their plan rather to hold their gatherings half-yearly. In 1658 they assembled in Easter week at Alcester, and appointed their second meeting to be held at Moreton in September. It is not certain whether their forebodings on the death of Cromwell did not occasion this second meeting to be omitted. They certainly met in the early part of 1659, after which time their meetings ceased for about thirty years, owing to the persecutions of all classes of Dissenters by Charles the Second and James the Second.

In order to give efficiency to their Association, the Sixteen Articles, with Scripture proof-passages, were printed and extensively circulated among the churches, the Baptist families of that period being diligent to have them read in their households, and compared with the Word of God. They were also careful to admit only such churches into their Association as approved of the Sixteen Articles, and particularly objected to

the "Free-willers," as the General Baptists were then often called. Written copies of their proceedings, or, as they styled them, "their Conclusions and Results," after every meeting, were circulated among the churches, in order to keep up an interest in the Association. The ministers and messengers, we are told in one of their Records, were very exemplary in this particular duty. The churches themselves frequently set apart a whole day for fasting and prayer previous to the Association, to ask God's blessing to rest upon the meetings.

One of the founders of this Association, Rev. James Wilmot, of Hook Norton, was one of the many hundreds of sufferers during the persecutions under Charles the Second. Crosby says: "Mr. James Wilmot, of Hook Norton, and Mr. Charles Archer, of Sweakly, in the county of Oxford, joint pastors of a baptized congregation meeting at Hook Norton, were great sufferers for their nonconformity. About the year 1664, they were taken at their meeting, and carried to the Castle of Oxford. At another time they were sent to Whitney Gaol. Mr. Wilmot was fined twenty pounds, for which all his goods were seized. They, not finding enough on the premises to satisfy them, seized upon the goods of Mr. Humphrey Gillit, a woolman, who was taken at the same meeting with him. Mr. Wilmot's father, a zealous Churchman, went to Sir Thomas Pennystone, the justice, who committed his son, and desired his release. The justice replied, '*He shall rot in gaol.*' Says Mr. Wilmot, 'Another justice had said the same, but he is now dead.' 'Though he be dead,' replied Sir Thomas, 'yet his work shall not die.' Mr. Thorp, the gaoler at Oxford, was most severe. He would not permit them to pray together; *and if they craved but a blessing on their meat*, he would come in a great rage and disturb them, saying, '*What! are you preaching over your victuals?*' The goods of Mr. Wilmot, who had been twice imprisoned in Oxford Gaol, were carried to Chipping Norton, and there publicly cryed for sale, on several market days; but none

would bid for them. Then they were carried to Swansford, to one of the informer's houses, who could make no money of them; and in the end they came again to Hook Norton, and proclaimed there that if anyone would lay down twenty shillings, they should have them all; a friend of Mr. Wilmot's did so, and he had all his goods again. When Mr. Wilmot was released from Whitney Gaol, they excommunicated him, and several writs were issued against him. But he, being informed of them, absconded, and so escaped their hands."*

Mr. Eccles, the pastor of the Bromsgrove Church, which united with the Midland Association after the Revolution, also suffered for his opinions. He was greatly ill-used, was put into Worcester Gaol, and would have remained there, but for the generous behaviour of Mr. Swift, one of the Members of Parliament for the county of Worcester, who became his bondsman for a thousand pounds, by which means he obtained his release.

The Midland Association was reconstructed in 1690, and has ever since annually held its meetings with great regularity. During the first thirty or forty years after this period, the original doctrinal basis of the Association was tacitly acknowledged; but various causes led to subsequent deviations; the scarcity of the copies of the *Confession of Faith;* the absence of any authorised record of the proceedings of the Association; and the fact that for a long period the circular letters were only *written.* "The dregs of Arminianism were," according to the fears expressed in the Bromsgrove Letter to the Association in 1787, "received by some of the ministers and churches of the Association;" and in 1790, "the Association deemed it proper to resolve—that no church be admitted but such as profess to believe the doctrines maintained in the heading to the circular letter, namely—personal election, particular redemption, free justification, efficacious grace, and the

* Crosby's History of the Baptists, Vol. III. pp. 124, 125.

final perseverance of the saints." Bromsgrove, it should be mentioned, is the only one of the nine churches that united in the reconstruction of the Association in 1690, which still continues in it, and is therefore the mother church; and of the seven churches which formed the Association in 1655, one is extinct, Moreton-in-the-Marsh, and the remaining six are now united with other county Associations. A great number of the circular letters from 1713 down to the present day are still in existence, and reveal the anxiety which has been uniformly held for the devotion and piety of its individual churches. In 1752 the Association met at Birmingham, and in their letter to the churches that year they recommend—"As a testimony of Christian love, let all the churches spare their minister at least one Lord's-day in the year, to supply destitute churches. We beg you to be content for that day without a supply, if none can be had." Unfortunately the original Association Book has been lost, and the present book only dates back to 1817.*

Most of the Local Associations among the Particular Baptists virtually contemplated similar objects in their union to those formally announced by the Midland Association, and with these objects the Local Associations of the General Baptists substantially agreed. Adam Taylor, the General Baptist historian, says, that the usual business transacted at their Local Associations related to (1) the reformation of inconsistent or immoral conduct, whether in ministers or private Christians; (2) the prevention or suppression of heresy; (3) the reconciling of differences between members and churches; (4) giving advice in difficult cases, whether respecting individuals or societies; (5) proposing plans of usefulness; (6) recommending cases that required pecuniary support; and (7) devising the most effectual

* "*The History of the Midland Association of Baptist Churches.* By W. Stokes, London, 1855." Many very interesting particulars are to be found in Mr. Stokes' admirable digest of the *History of the Midland Association*, from which this account has been taken.

means of promoting the spread of Christianity in the world at large, but especially in their own churches.

It is not easy to ascertain how many Associations existed at the time of the Commonwealth, since new ones were constantly being formed, and old ones dissolved; but there is good ground for affirming that they were found in every part of the country. Some of them dwindled away soon after the Restoration of Charles the II.; but others continued to meet, despite the oppressive and cruel measures that were enacted to crush out Dissenters of every name. In 1678, for example, the Buckinghamshire General Baptist Association was attended by fifty-four messengers, elders, and brethren. In the same year a new Particular Baptist Association was formed at Hempstead, Herts, with which were united the Baptist church in Petty France, London, and several churches in the country. Dr. Nehemiah Coxe, on his return to his church in London, "gave an account of the comfortable issue of the meeting of the messengers of the associated churches, and of their desire that for the future some brethren on behalf of this (Petty France) and other congregations in the city, might be, as occasion is offered, appointed to assist at their meetings." The records of the Petty France Church tell us that these meetings were held half-yearly, and that one or both their ministers generally attended them, "to assist there, on behalf of the church." The "County" Association, as Ivimey calls this Particular Association, continued to meet now in the country, and once in every few years in London, until 1682, when a great storm of persecution came down upon the church in Petty France. This minute, passed in the spring of the same year, will illustrate the character of the church:—"In regard to the uncertainty of our obtaining conveniency of meeting as formerly, by reason of the present persecutions, and our exclusion from Petty France, that the contribution for the poor be made by monthly subscription, and our usual times of breaking bread be altered from three weeks, to once every month, to be computed

from this day, May 27, 1682." The "County" Association managed to find some quiet nook in London the following April in which to hold their half-yearly meeting, the last as far as we have been able to ascertain.

General Baptist Assemblies.

Before the period of which we are writing, the General Baptists had felt that, while their Local Associations were useful in their several districts, more concerted action and general co-operation was needed than these Associations supplied. To meet this want they established General Assemblies, which were usually held in London. The Assemblies were composed, like the Local Associations, of messengers, elders, or ministers, and brethren. Mr. Grantham enters very carefully into the question of the claims and character of "General Assemblies" in his remarkable and scholarly treatise.* In this we are shown that Local Associations are conventions of the pastors of as many churches as by reason of vicinity of country, and acquaintance with each other, who, without the disturbance of the public peace, meet together;" and that "General Assemblies are meetings for mutual consultation of many churches upon emergent occasions." He then treats "of the question, Who hath power to convene General Assemblies?"—answering it by saying, that this is equally pertaining to churches, and all pastors; but that which calls the Assembly is, the emergency of the occasion." The second and third questions he discusses are these:—"How far agreements made by a General Assembly do oblige the churches concerned by their representatives;" and "What sort of Christians are to give voice deliberative and decisive in General Councils and Assemblies."

The "*Orthodox Creed*" thus describes "General Councils or Assemblies: "General Councils, or Assemblies, consisting of

* "*Christianismus Primitivus:*" Book II. chap. 10, pp. 132—143.

bishops, elders, and brethren of the several churches of Christ, and being legally convened, and met together out of all the churches, and the churches appearing by their representatives, make but one church, *and have lawful rights and suffrage in this general meeting, or Assembly, to act in the name of Christ*, it being of Divine authority, and is the best means under heaven to preserve unity, to prevent heresy, and superintendency among or in any congregation whatsoever within its limits, or jurisdiction. And to such a meeting, or Assembly, appeals ought to be made, in case any injustice be done, or heresy and schism is countenanced in any particular congregation of Christ; and the decisive voice in such General Assemblies is the major part; and such General Assemblies have lawful power to hear and determine, and also to excommunicate." (Article xxxix.)

The date of the first Assembly of the General Baptists is uncertain; but Mr. Grantham speaks of Assemblies in 1671, as already established and approved;* and in the treatise just quoted, published in 1678, he says, after mentioning the meeting recorded in Acts xv., "according to this precedent," (or as he spells it, "President,") the baptized churches in this age and nation (although unworthy to compare with those worthies) have kept an Assembly-General for many years, for the better settlement of the churches to which they are related." There is no mention of the General Assemblies of the Particular Baptist Churches during this period, except the words of Grantham be regarded as intimating their existence. The Assembly of the General Baptists adhered to Grantham's definition, and only met on "emergent occasions." During a period of nearly forty years (from 1689 to 1728), there were only twenty-two meetings.

That Grantham had great faith in the value of these Assemblies is patent to every reader of his books. In one of them he thus writes: "They are, through the blessing of God,

* "Sigh for Peace," pp. 130—132.

the best expedient under the sun for composing divisions in the churches. Here the liberty of Christians should be, yea, *must* be maintained; though they differ right much in their opinions in matters of religion. We know well, that, not only the Christians in the ages bordering on the primitive, but even the Apostles of our Lord, did allow Christians of very different persuasions, freely to deliberate on things propounded in such Assemblies. For my part I could heartily wish that all the congregations of Christians in the world, that are baptized according to the appointment of Christ, would make one Consistory, at least sometimes, to consider the matters in difference between them. For if this be not admitted, there are no means remaining, as I conceive, to heal their divisions; and consequently to obtain that peace which should rule in the hearts of all God's people, because they are thereunto called in one body."

The system of Local Associations and General Assemblies gave rise, says Adam Taylor,* to a custom of *appeal* from the decision of particular churches. When any member thought himself aggrieved by the proceedings of his church, he might appeal to two or more neighbouring churches, and ask them to hear and judge the case. If the appeal were received, a meeting of the deputies of each of the religious societies, or churches, to which the appeal was made, was appointed; and, after hearing both parties at length, judgment was given. But if either party still remained dissatisfied, the whole question could be brought before the Local Association to which they belonged. There was yet a final appeal from the Local Association to the General Assembly. The discontented considering, after a time, that they had a *right* of appeal, and differences becoming thereby protracted, and a captious spirit engendered, the Assembly of the General Baptists at length resolved that no such cases should be received by them, unless with the mutual consent and request of all parties concerned.

* "History of the English General Baptists." Vol. I. pp. 460—1.

A further danger to the independence of the individual churches was checked, by restraining the power of both Local Associations and General Assemblies to offering advice. The decision therefore, in either case, only challenged respectful attention from the wisdom, experience, and piety of the persons who composed such meetings. "We ought," says Grantham, "to consider with great respect, what is concluded by a General Council of Christ's true ministers; yet we may lawfully doubt of what they deliver, unless they confirm it by the Word of the Lord."

The Caffynite Controversy.

A few years before the Revolution what is known as the "Caffynite Controversy" broke out among the General Baptists. As it led to a rupture in their General Assembly, and to the formation, and continuance for some time of a rival body called *The General Association*, it is necessary to give some brief account of its origin, progress, and apparent termination. Mr. Matthew Caffyn was pastor of the church at Horsham, in Sussex, and is described as a minister eminent for his diligence and success, who contributed much to the spread of the General Baptist interest in those parts, and had suffered greatly for his attachment to it. He was a man of good natural abilities, which had been improved by a liberal education; an expert disputant who, for half a century, had been considered the champion of his party, and was often called to defend it against able opponents. He also held the position of "messenger" to the churches in Kent. Adopting opinions at variance with the general sentiments of the Denomination on the nature of Christ, and freely expressing them to his friend Mr. Joseph Wright, of Maidstone, his friend thought it his duty to sacrifice private friendship to the public good. Wright preferred a charge against Caffyn at the General Assembly in 1686, of denying both the divinity and the humanity of Christ, and demanding that he should be expelled

from the Assembly, and from all communion with the churches therein represented. Crosby says that Caffyn, in his answer to these charges, "readily acknowledged that there were some things in the Athanasian Creed which were above his understanding, after the most diligent and impartial examination; and that therefore he never had, nor could as yet receive it as the standard of his faith. He insisted upon it, that the Holy Scriptures contained all that could be necessary for a Christian to believe and profess; that if he were from hence catechised ever so severely he should not decline a free and open declaration of his sentiments; alleged his belief in Christ, as the Word, in the beginning of the creation of God; and that he was in the highest imaginable sense, God, consistently with that most established truth, that there can but be one absolutely supreme God. He thought Christ was the 'God over all,' intended by St. Paul, which he could understand conformably to our Lord's own declarations concerning Himself. That, as to His flesh, He believed that Christ was of the seed of the woman, the son and offspring of David, conceived indeed miraculously, but born of Mary in the same natural way as other children. That it had been his study and delight to exalt and honour his Saviour, both as God and man, to the highest degree of thought. That he had never disturbed the minds of any Christians about unrevealed sublimities, but was willing everyone should have the same liberty and judgment which he claimed for himself; that he was far enough from perfection in knowledge; but, as his friends well knew, was always open to conviction, and thankful for every addition and further light."

The Assembly were satisfied with Caffyn's explanations, and Mr. Wright was "much discountenanced for his unbecoming reflections, and want of charity," but did not relinquish his purpose; and again brought his charge against Mr. Caffyn at an Assembly held at Aylesbury, this time being supported by a friend whose name is not known. A second time Mr. Wright

failed, since, says, Crosby, "that reverend body resolved to maintain amity and friendship with Mr. Caffyn, though he might vary a little in some abstruse unrevealed speculations." Mr. Wright now withdrew from the Assemblies, protested against them all; but the controversy did not cease. Mr. John Waller was excluded from the Bucks churches for holding similar views, and Mr. Caffyn wrote to support him under his persecution. Caffyn now openly advocated his opinions, and talked freely of them at the Assembly in 1692. The following year the former charges were again preferred, backed by Caffyn's letter to Waller, and Caffyn's known words uttered at the last Assembly. The greater part of the meeting voted that Mr. Caffyn "was not guilty of the matters charged against him;" but, to establish their own orthodoxy, declared, "that the opinions ascribed to Mr. Caffyn were heresies." This gave great offence to some; and a spirited "Protest" against it was signed by sixteen "messengers, elders and brethren, representatives of several congregations in divers parts of the nation," in order to "clear themselves and the congregations to which they belonged of those gross errors, and of countenancing them." The Assembly adjourned for three years.

The General Association.

In 1696, the subject was again resumed. The Protesters insisted on Mr. Caffyn's being brought to trial; and if found guilty excluded from the communion of the churches in the Assembly. A third time the majority decided in Mr. Caffyn's favour, re-affirming, in fact, their former opinion. The Protesters now withdrew, and soon after published "The reasons for their separation." They also resolved to hold an annual meeting in London, at the time of the General Assembly, to consist of the messengers, elders, and brethren of the churches which approved of their secession. This meeting they styled the *General Association;* to distinguish it, as they say, "from

particular associations held in divers parts of the country." The first meeting was held in May, 1697, and was attended by the representatives of the churches of White's Alley, London; Deptford, Kent; Rainham, Essex; Wilbram, Cambridgeshire; Aylesbury, Cuddington, and Berkhampstead, Bucks. The following year they were joined by the Church under Dr. W. Russell, London, and the congregations at Brainford, Essex, and Ashford, Kent.

This did not end the dispute. At the Assembly in 1697, Mr. Amory presented a letter from the Western Association, earnestly calling upon it to bring Mr. Caffyn to immediate examination; and the following year Mr. Garrett brought up a similar request from the Northamptonshire churches, and Mr. Hooke from the churches in Lincolnshire. Mr. Caffyn is allowed to explain himself for the fourth time. So unsatisfactory were his explanations that Mr. Amory said to Mr. Caffyn, before all the Assembly, "that God, whom my brother Caffyn worships, is none of my God; neither will I worship Him. That Christ that he worships is none of my Christ; neither will I worship Him." The old expedient was again adopted; the sentiments ascribed to Mr. Caffyn were declared to be heretical, an investigation, however, being promised at the next Assembly in 1700. Meanwhile several additional churches joined the seceders, and others were only waiting the issue of the promised trial.

The trial came to nothing. An "Expedient," as it was called, was proposed as a possible basis of union, not only with the seceders (who had already been admonished as "walking disorderly, and desired to return"), but with those who were still dissatisfied in the Assembly. This consisted of an obscure and ambiguous resolution, drawn up by four members of the two parties in the Assembly, and was offered to, but rejected by the General Association. The breach was now fast widening between the dis-

putants. In some little temper, ill befitting the grave character of the Assembly, they "agreed to stand by what they did in 1696;" and also declared that those who published any of their own "conceptions concerning the expressions in the 'Expedient,' should be regarded as disturbers, and be accountable to the Assembly." Two years afterwards the charges were again renewed by the Northamptonshire churches; and a fifth time the Assembly declared Mr. Caffyn's statements satisfactory. The Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire churches now went over in a body to the General Association.

A temporary reconciliation was afterwards brought about by a book entitled, *A Vindication of the Ancient General Assembly*. This book was laid before the General Association meeting at White's Alley, in June 8th, 1704; and, as a consequence, they sent messengers to the General Assembly then sitting at Goodman's-fields, inquiring how far it was prepared to stand by the overtures made in the *Vindication*. The same day the Assembly replied, that though they had not in any way, as a body, been concerned in the publication of that book, they accepted its overtures, and hoped the General Association would also. A conference ensued between four brethren from each party; a number of articles of faith and conditions of union were drawn up, and agreed to; and the next day, the members of the General Assembly and the General Association met as one body.

The union, after all, was only seeming, and not real. The Assembly had, throughout, protested against the errors ascribed to Mr. Caffyn, although adhering so tenaciously to him; but the General Association determined that, upon the first sign of any breach of the new basis of union, if they were refused a hearing, or could obtain no redress, they would resume their meetings. This actually took place a few years after.

The General Assembly, thus seriously weakened as to numbers, gradually became weaker in other ways. The conciliatory and yet inflexible Scripturists were succeeded, as one after another the older men were called away to their reward, by a class of men who carried their speculations farther than Caffyn ever ventured. Greater prominence was now given, by the more popular and learned men, to "right reason;" and the liberty which insisted on retaining men known to differ very broadly from the earlier views of the General Baptists, speedily showed its effects. By degrees, the majority of the ministers became Anti-trinitarians; and it is as an Anti-trinitarian body that the shadow of the Assembly of the old General Baptists still continues to meet in London every Whitsuntide. The Lincolnshire churches who united in the General Association joined the New Connexion of General Baptists in 1770, and the other churches have either dwindled away, or have, like Ashford, Rainham, and others, become united with the various county Associations of Particular Baptist churches.

The First Particular Baptist General Assembly.

The first General Assembly of the Particular Baptist churches, "the greatest of the Assemblies," as Marlow calls it, was the one called by a letter from the London churches, the year after the landing of William of Orange. As it marks a new era in the Particular Baptist churches, it may not be without interest to quote the letter entire.

"*London, July* 22, 1689.

"*To the Church of Christ at* ——. *Kind salutations.*—We, the elders and ministering brethren of the churches in and about London, being several times assembled together, to consider the present state of the Baptized Congregations, not only in this city, but also in the country, cannot, but first of all, adore the divine wisdom and goodness of Almighty God, in respect of His late most gracious Providence, for our deliver-

ance from that dismal dispensation which threatened us, from the continual and unwearied attempt and designs of the enemy of our sacred religion and civil liberties; by which means our sinking and drooping spirits are again revived, and our earnest hopes and long expectations raised and afresh quickened, in respect of the more full and perfect deliverance of the Church of God, and His more glorious appearance, for the accomplishment of those gracious promises and prophecies contained in the Holy Scriptures relating to the later days.

"But, in the second place, we cannot but bewail the present condition our churches seem to be in, fearing that much of that former strength, life, and vigour which attended us is gone; and in many places the interest of our Lord Jesus Christ seems to be much neglected which is in our hands, and the congregations to languish, and our beauty to fade away, (which thing, we have some ground to judge, you cannot but be sensible of as well as we); and from hence we have been put upon most mature and serious considerations of such things that may be the cause thereof, and amongst others are come to this result—That the great neglect of the present ministry is one thing, together with that general unconcernedness there generally seems to be of giving fit and proper encouragement for the raising up of an able and honourable ministry for the time to come; with many other things which, we hope, we are not left wholly in the dark about, which we find we are not in a capacity to prevent and cure (as instruments in the hands of God, and His blessing attending our Christian endeavours), *unless we can obtain a general meeting here in London of two principal brethren, of every church of the same faith with us, in every county respectively.* We do, therefore, humbly entreat and beseech you, that you would be pleased to appoint two of your brethren, one of the ministry, and one principal brother of your congregation with him, as your messengers, and send them up to meet with the rest of the elders and brethren of the churches in London, on the third of September next; and then

we hope we shall have that before us, and be also helped to consider such things that may much tend to the honour of God, and further the peace, and well-being, and establishment at present, and also the future comfort of the churches. We hope you will readily, notwithstanding the charge [cost], comply with our pious and Christian desires herein; and, in the meantime, to signify your intentions forthwith in a letter, which we shall have you direct to our reverend and well-beloved brethren, Mr. H. Knollys, or Mr. W. Kiffin. This is all, at present, from us, your brethren and labourers in God's vineyard, who greet you well in the Lord Jesus Christ, and subscribe ourselves your servants in the Gospel,—

"William Kiffin, Benjamin Keach,
"Hanserd Knollys, Edward Man,
"John Harris, Richard Adams,
"George Barrett."

"Brother Kiffin lives in White's Alley, Little Moorfields."

This letter was everywhere well received, and the ministers and messengers of more than a hundred churches in England and Wales met at the time appointed. The Assembly continued its sittings for eight or nine days, was pervaded by a solemn, earnest, and united spirit, and transacted business of real importance to the welfare and prosperity of the churches. The Assembly afterwards issued a pamphlet, entitled—*The Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly of divers Pastors, Messengers, and ministering Brethren of the Baptized churches, met together in London, from September* 3-12, 1689, *from divers parts of England and Wales, owning the doctrine of personal election and final perseverance; sent from, and concerned for more than a hundred congregations of the same faith with themselves.*

The first day was spent in "humbling themselves before the Lord, and in seeking of Him the right way into the best means and method for repairing their breaches, and recovering themselves into their former order, beauty, and glory." On the

second day, they agreed upon certain preliminaries, as the foundation or rules of their Assembly, in order to guard against any misapprehensions in the minds of the members of their respective churches, declaring that "they disclaimed all manner of superiority, or superintendency over the churches, having no authority or power to prescribe or impose anything upon the faith or practice of any of the churches of Christ, their whole intendment being to be helpers together of one another, by way of counsel and advice." Differences in individual churches "in point of communion" were to be left undisturbed; and differences between one church and another were not allowed to be debated, "until the rule that Christ hath given in the matter (Matt. xviii. 15) be first answered." Even their advice is regarded as "not binding to any one church till the consent of that church be first had, and they conclude the same among themselves." Moreover, "all things offered by way of counsel and advice were to be proved out of the Word of God, and the (particular) Scripture annexed." The "breviates" of the meeting were to be transcribed and sent to every particular church, with a letter. Each person was to present to the Assembly his letter of recommendation from the church to which he belonged, and none were to be permitted to speak without the general consent of the Assembly. After the letters from the several churches were read, and prayer offered, the meeting adjourned.

On the third day and following days various business was transacted. The first related to the establishment of a Baptist fund. It was agreed, that it should be originated as "a free will offering, to be collected with all convenient speed;" and that this fund should be kept up by annual collections in each church, "weekly, monthly, or quarterly, according to their own convenience." The fund itself was to be devoted to the following purposes:—*first*, to help the weaker churches in the maintenance of their ministers, so that they (the ministers) might give themselves wholly to preaching the Gospel;

secondly, "to send ministers that are ordained, or at least solemnly called to preach, both in city and country, where the Gospel hath, or hath not yet been preached, and to visit the churches"—the ministers to be selected by at least two churches in London or the country; and, *thirdly*, "to assist those members that shall be found in any of the churches that are disposed for study, have an inviting gift, and are sound in fundamentals, in attaining to the knowledge and understanding of the languages, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew."

Then followed the discussion of numerous questions proposed to the General Assembly by the several churches. It is significant that the very first question discussed was the ever-recurring one even now—"*Whether it be not expedient for churches that live near together, and consisting of small members, and are not able to maintain their own ministry, to join together for the better and more comfortable support of their ministry, and the better edification one of another?*" Of course the Assembly answered in the affirmative. The duty of each church to provide "a comfortable maintenance for the minister, according to its ability," was also agreed upon in the same way; likewise the propriety of each church "to provide itself with such a minister, and solemnly set him apart his office." The fourth question reads curiously by the light of our own day—"Whether baptized believers are not at liberty to hear any sober and pious men of the Independent and Presbyterian persuasions when they have no opportunity to attend upon the preaching of the Word in their own assembly, or have no other to preach to them?" The "breviates" say, "Concluded affirmatively. Acts xviii. 24, 25, 26."*

* The General Baptists substantially agreed with them on this point. At the General Association in 1701, "Brother James Clarke complained of some that neglected their duty in assembling with the church, and go to hear Presbyterian ministers at such times as the church is assembled." The General Association declared that "it was the duty of the members to assemble with the church; and that all that were negligent therein should be *admonished to make good their places*."—*MS. Proceedings of the General Association*, Vol. I. p. 29.

Of the other questions on which an opinion was asked, these were some: the unlawfulness of delaying the ordination of "gifted brethren" for many years, whether for the office of elder or deacon; the observance of the apostolic rule about marriage (1 Cor. vii. 39); the evil of neglecting the services agreed upon by the church; and how persons are to be dealt with who "will not communicate to the necessary expenses of the church whereof they are members, according to their ability." The last question the Assembly thus answered—"Resolved, that upon clear proof, the persons so offending, as aforesaid, should be duly admonished; and if no reformation appears, the church ought to withdraw from them. Ephe. v. 3; Matt. xxv. 42; 1 John iii. 7."* Persons who withdrew from "the fellowship of any particular church, and joined themselves to the communion of the National Church," the Assembly suggested should "be reclaimed by all due means of instruction and admonition;" and if not reclaimed, rejected. They affirmed, in answer to other questions, that believers were actually reconciled, justified, or adopted, *when they are really implanted in Jesus Christ by faith;* that the first day of the week should be religiously observed as the Lord's Day; that the excess of luxury in dress was "a shame and scandal, and needed reformation;" that it was an unquestionable advantage "for our brethren now in the ministry, to obtain a competent knowledge of the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin tongues, that they may be the better capable of defending the truth against opposers;" and that "an elder of one church may

* The General Assembly of General Baptists eight years after (1697), suggest another method of meeting this kind of remissness: "It is the agreement and advice of this Assembly that the deacons, or such as are deacons, in every congregation, in receiving the church's collection, do take notice of *the particular receipts;* namely, *from whom, and what;* and if they observe any members to be short therein, to advise and admonish to more liberalitie; and if not, to acquaint the churches themselves with that, *so that there may be an equality in the performance of that great duty.—MS. Proceedings of the General Assembly*, Vol. I. p. 12.

administer the ordinance of the Lord's Supper to another church of the same faith, being called so to do by the said church, necessity only being considered."

In addition to the transaction of this business, the Assembly agreed upon a vindication of themselves, as a whole, "against taking any part in recognising the dispensing power" claimed by James the First, proclaimed their abhorrence of his arbitrary acts, and announced their hearty determination "to venture their all for the Protestant religion, and the liberties of their native country." That a few congregations should have taken advantage of this "dispensing power," they urged, was no reason for laying "the whole party under reproach and infamy." They thus conclude their minute on this subject:—"We do, with great thankfulness to God, acknowledge His special goodness to these nations in raising up our present King William, to be a blessed instrument in His hand to deliver us from Popery and arbitrary power, and shall always, as in duty bound, pray the Lord may continue him, and his royal consort, long to be a blessing to these kingdoms; and shall always be ready, to the utmost of our ability, in our places, to join our hearts and hands, with the rest of our Protestant brethren, for the preservation of the Protestant religion, and the liberties of the nation."

The Assembly advised the churches to read the *London Confession of Faith;* affirmed their approval of "a certain little book, lately recommended by divers elders dwelling in and about the City of London, entitled, *The Minister's Maintenance Vindicated*" (written by Benjamin Keach), urging that it be "dispersed among all our several congregations;" and agreed upon a "circular letter" to the churches generally, in which they recommended the adoption of a general fast for the tenth of October, next ensuing, setting forth their reasons for its appointment. The chief reasons are these:—"The decay among the churches of first love, faith and zeal for the ways and worship of God; the length of time during

which this decay had been going on; and the many more judgments which God had brought upon the nation; the need for penitence, and the out-pouring of God's Spirit, that they may understand whereabouts they are;" and the call for "earnest cries and supplications to the Lord for the lineal seed of Abraham, the poor Jews."

The letter was signed by thirty brethren, "in the name and behalf of the whole Assembly;" and the meeting broke up, with the agreement that the next General Assembly should be held "at London, on that day which is called Whitsun Monday, 1690."

The proceedings had been opened and concluded every day with solemn prayer. The total number of persons actually present was one hundred and fifty; and so thoroughly united were they in heart and mind, that at the close, they could say,—"Scarcely one brother dissented from the Assembly in the sentiments of his mind in any one thing proposed to their serious considerations."

The Second and Third Particular Baptist General Assemblies.

The next meeting assembled in June, 1690, and continued its sittings from the ninth to the sixteenth; and a third was held in the same month in the year following. From some remarks made in the letter to the churches written by this third Assembly, it appears that the attendance of the country brethren had not been so numerous at this as at the preceding Assemblies. "Let not the incident charges you are exposed to," say they, in inviting those "who live in the country to send up their particular messengers" to the next meeting, "be a discouragement, we being persuaded that our friends in the City who are not liable to such charges, will make a compensation by a more liberal contributing to the public stock." In these days of quick

travelling to London, and at surprisingly cheap rates as compared with any other time, it is difficult to understand the cost and trouble of a journey nearly two hundred years ago to the metropolis from Wales, or from the most northerly parts of England. The chief business transacted at the *third* General Assembly related to the Particular Baptist Fund.

At this time (1691), there were at least a dozen Local Associations of the Particular Baptist Denominations in England and Wales: London, Middlesex, Kent and Essex formed one; the churches in Somerset, Dorset, Wilts, Gloucester and Bristol a second; the churches in Oxfordshire and Berks a third; Norfolk and Suffolk a fourth; the Devon churches a fifth; half a dozen churches in Yorkshire, Cumberland and Northumberland, a sixth; the Hampshire churches a seventh; Herts, Bucks and Bedford an eighth; Stepton and Haddenham a ninth; seven churches in South Wales and Hereford a tenth; Carmarthenshire an eleventh; Worcester, Warwick, part of Oxford, Leicester and part of Hereford a twelfth, there being only *six* churches at that time in the whole of these counties; Broomsgrove, Warwick, Dimock, Hereford, Tewkesbury, Moreton-in-the-Marsh, Hook Norton, Alcester, and Kilby.

The Fourth Particular Baptist General Assembly.

The fourth General Assembly met in London in May, 1692. The associated churches then numbered one hundred and seven. As the Local Associations seemed to have lessened the interest felt in the General Assembly, by supplying a nearer and readier means of fraternization and counsel, the following resolutions were adopted:—

"1. That whereas, for some years past, the churches have had several associate and county meetings, and one General one in London annually, it is now proposed to divide this General meeting into two, and to keep one in the west, and another in the east; that in the west to be at

Bristol, and the other in London. It is desired that all the churches will send messengers once a year, as may be most for their conveniency: and that either from their particular churches, or those that live remote from such Associations as they think meet to keep. 2. That the meeting at Bristol be kept annually at the time called Easter; and that at London at the time called Whitsuntide. 3. That two messengers be sent down from London every time to that at Bristol, and also two sent up from that at Bristol to London, for the maintaining of General Communion."

Again the Assembly showed great anxiety about "the fund" for "keeping those ministers that are poor," and "for the education of those brethren that may be approved to learn the knowledge of those tongues wherein the Scriptures are written." Churches were urged, "for the better keeping up of the fund, to make their collections quarterly."

Something of the difficulty already felt by the General Baptists in their Assembly now began to trouble the Particular Baptists; and they also guarded themselves from degenerating into a Court of Appeal by agreeing; (1) that these Assemblies are not to be accountable to one another any more than churches are. (2) *That no churches make appeals to them to determine matters of faith or fact; but propose or query for advice.*" The question about "singing the praises of God in public Assemblies" was referred by this Assembly to seven brethren; but the account of this we shall give in a subsequent chapter.

Although there were only one hundred and seven churches represented in this fourth Assembly, it must not be supposed that the whole of the churches in England "owning the doctrines of personal election and final perseverance" accepted the invitation. There were many churches in Bedfordshire, for example, founded by the labours of John Bunyan, which were not included. The "prince of allegorists," as Macaulay styles Bunyan, did not make

baptism by immersion on a profession of faith a condition of church fellowship; in which he was also supported by Henry Jessey and Vavasor Powell; but the brethren who were united together in this General Assembly were chiefly on the opposite side, and both William Kiffin and Henry d'Anvers among the Calvinistic Baptists, and Henry Denne among the General Baptists, wrote with some bitterness, at least, so Bunyan tells us, in favour of their opinions.

The Fifth Particular Baptist General Assembly.

The fifth General Assembly met at Bristol the following April. The first day was spent "in solemnly seeking the face of God in prayer, for counsel, advice, and guidance" in their work. "On the second day, after seeking the Lord, the letters from the several churches were read, and a particular relation of the state of all the churches was given in by their several messengers. Some questions were proposed, and the meeting was dismissed, with the blessing of God."

The remaining days during which the Assembly continued its sittings were spent in discussing the various questions proposed to it by the different churches. Chief among these were some touching certain "irregularities," as they were deemed, which had crept into the churches, in regard to the administration of the ordinances of the Lord's Supper and baptism. The Assembly declared "that no private brother (however gifted), if not solemnly called to the ministerial office, and separated thereto, ought to administer" either the one or the other; but an elder might, "called to the office by the suffrage of the church, who had not yet been ordained by the laying on of hands." They were equally emphatic in discouraging men "who, being vainly puffed up with their fleshly minds, did presume to preach publicly, without being solemnly called and appointed by the church thereto." "We advise and desire," say they, "that every particular church

would do what in them lies to discountenance this practice, and to prevent all such from exercising their pretended gift, it being contrary to Romans x. 15. And also that they would not send forth, nor suffer, any person among themselves to preach publicly, of whose qualification they had not had sufficient trial, and whom they had not called thereto; that the name of God may not be dishonoured, the peace of the churches disturbed, nor the reputation of the ministry blemished."

The question of "the education of youth," had also been troubling some of the older men. They were afraid that this constant desire on the part of the Assembly to encourage and help young men in acquiring a knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek languages, sprang out of a mistaken preference for human learning; or, at any rate, an opinion that they regarded such learning as "equal with the gifts of the Spirit." The Assembly quieted the nerves of these less educated brethren, by declaring, that "they abhor and detest any such principle and practice;" regard "the gift of edification as a distinct thing from acquired parts;" are not ignorant of the fact "that men may attain the greatest degrees in human learning, and yet, notwithstanding, be ignorant of Christ and His glorious Gospel." They are also quite willing to confess "that God does sometimes bestow greater gifts, for the edification of His Church, on some who have not attained a knowledge of the tongues, than He doth on some others who have;" "that still the churches of Jesus Christ should improve what gifts they have, and pray for more." Of course it was "a great snare and very dangerous," to think that "the hidden wisdom of God" could be comprehended by mere human learning; and it was "a great abuse of such learning, if it puffed men up, made them lean upon it, and despise the brethren who had the gift of edification, but lacked their education." "The knowledge of tongues, moreover, is not essential, or absolutely necessary, to constitute a minister of the Gospel;" and yet

"they dare not limit the Holy One, *who bestows gifts for edification upon the learned, as well as upon the unlearned.*"

The Sixth Particular Baptist General Assembly.

The sixth General Assembly was held in London in June of the same year; that is, two months later than the meeting at Bristol. Andrew Gifford and George Fownes (the last died in Gloucester Jail) were the Bristol delegates. The first and second days were spent in a similar manner to the first and second days at Bristol. The four remaining days were given up to business. The rules of the first Assembly were now somewhat relaxed: "Every one had liberty to speak without interruption;" and difference of opinion would be listened to "if expressed with Christian charity." After reading and assenting to the minutes of the Bristol Assembly, they again determined "to continue and uphold the Fund." It was also agreed, "that a Catechism be drawn up, containing the substance of the Christian religion, for the instruction of children and servants." From his knowledge and judgment, William Collins, the pastor of the church in Petty France, was wisely selected to draw up this Catechism, many editions of which were afterwards published. "It continues to be," wrote Dr. Underhill in 1854, "the only Catechism of value among (Particular) Baptists." In the preface to this Catechism, it is declared that, as their *Confession* "was almost in all points the same as that of the (Westminster) Assembly and Savoy;" so, in this "shorter account of Christian principles," there is a close agreement with the shorter Catechism of the Assembly." The only other item of business was a resolution agreeing "that the Confession of the baptized churches of the last impression should be translated into Latin, with all convenient speed;" a resolution which seems to have remained a dead letter.

The seventh General Assembly met in Bristol in April 1694. From the letter which they addressed to the London churches,

it is evident that their old affection for these General Assemblies had declined. The Bristol brethren wrote to say "that they were grieved that the very men who, a few years ago, had done so much to promote Associations," had grown lukewarm in regard to them; that they were "troubled" at the delay in the publication of the Catechism, which the London churches "had minuted that brother Collins should draw up;" and hoped thousands would be soon printed, "and sent abroad to the churches."

From this time we hear no more of the General Assemblies of the Particular Baptists in London; but the Western half of the Assembly continued to meet annually from 1696 to 1730, and the records have been preserved of every year but one between those dates.

The London Association.

In 1702 the Western Association met at Trowbridge, at which it was agreed "that a letter should be sent to the London churches to excite them to renew their association with the churches in the country." This was not the first time that the Western brethren had striven to fan the expiring zeal of the London churches, and it is hard to conjecture what led the latter to pass over in silence these various overtures. But though the appeals did not lead to a renewal of the connection between the two, it incited the ministers in London to form an Association of their own churches. In 1704 thirteen churches agreed to this proposal, and met on the 17th of April, at Lorimers' Hall. These were—Broad-street, Old Gravel-lane, Wapping; Pinner's Hall; Goat Yard-passage, Horsley Down, Southwark; Pennington-street, Virginia-street; Church-lane, Limehouse; Artillery-lane, Spitalfields; Paul's, Shadwell; Devonshire-square; Little Wild-street; Bagnio-court; Collier's Rents, White-street, Southwark; Lorimers' Hall; and Joiners' Hall, Friars'-lane, Thames-street. Rev. John Piggot, minister of Little Wild-street, preached a sermon from Rom. xiv. 19,

which was afterwards printed under the title, "Union and Peace recommended." Rev. Richard Adams, minister of Devonshire-square (formerly incumbent of the parish church Humberstone, near Leicester, and one of Cromwell's *Triers*), was chosen moderator. The letters from the churches were read, each of which submitted some subjects for the discussion and decision of the Association. To regulate the business, it was at once agreed that whatever the Assembly might adopt should only be regarded as advice, and not be binding on the churches any further than they should severally determine; that each speaker should stand up, "address his discourse to the moderator, and no other person shall speak until he sits down; that no opinion wherein any of the churches represented in this Assembly differ from the rest shall be controverted in the Assembly;" and that "the several matters recommended to the consideration of this Assembly by letters from the churches shall be considered in the same order in which the letters were received."

The meetings lasted three days. Various questions affecting the welfare of the London churches were discussed. One referred to the rule to be observed in the reception by one church of members from another. It was suggested that such reception "should not be without recommendation, or, at least, without sending messengers to the church from which such persons come;" and that the reasons for desiring such dismission should also be sent to the church to which they belong. Another tried to check the migratory tendency of London churches, "the flying camp," as the Rev. John Newton designated them. The Assembly agreed: "That the members of each church ought ordinarily to attend the worship of God in the church to which they stand related, and to make a common practice of deserting the assemblies to which they belong,"—for the sake of running hither and thither after other ministers, however gifted—"is a great discouragement to the ministers of their churches; that it occasions the neglect of

the poor among them, and that the continuance of such a practice has a tendency to weaken, and will, perhaps, in time, issue in the dissolution of some churches." A third subject arose out of the separations and secessions which occasionally take place in Congregational churches; partly upon a change of ministers; and partly through a difference of judgment on matters of doctrine or discipline. To meet such cases, it was resolved: "That in case the minor part of any church break off their communion from that church, the church state is to be accounted to remain with the major part. And in case the major part of any church be fundamentally corrupted with heresy and immorality, the minor part may and ought to separate from such a degenerate society; and either join themselves to some regular church or churches, or else, if they are a competent number, constitute a church state by a solemn covenant among themselves." A fourth subject sprang out of the controversy then raging about Dr. Tobias Crisp's Antinomian sermons. Here is a single specimen of his opinions:—"Let me speak freely to you; and, in doing so, tell you that the Lord hath no more to lay to an elect person; *yet, in the height of iniquity, and in the excess of riot, and committing all the abominations that can be committed*, I say, *even then*, when an elect person runs such a course, *the Lord hath no more to lay to that person's charge than God hath to lay to the sin of the believer; nay, God hath no more to lay to the charge of that person than He hath to lay to the charge of a saint triumphant in glory.*" This abominable doctrine, utterly subversive of all morality, greatly shocked the London Assembly, and by the following decision they strongly condemned Crisp's Antinomian principles, and supported the principles which were called, by his friends, the *Neonomian* opinions. They said:—"It is the opinion of this Assembly that the doctrine of sanctification by the impartation of the holiness of Christ's nature does, in its consequences, render inherent holiness by the Holy Spirit unnecessary, and tends to overthrow natural, as well as

revealed religion." A fifth subject referred to the maintenance of ministers. During the time of persecution under the Stuarts, many ministers had followed some secular calling, and had not received any income from their churches. The men who followed them often found the people unable, perhaps, also, unwilling, to furnish what the first General Assembly calls, in its *Confession*, "a comfortable supply." Either, therefore, with a view of shaming the churches into a more generous treatment of their ministers; or, in order to supplement the narrow and inadequate income they received, the following resolution was adopted—"That it be recommended to the several associate churches represented by this Assembly, that each church do make an annual collection for the relief of such ministers in and about London, dwelling within the bills of mortality, as have but a small allowance from the churches to which they belong." The sixth matter of business referred to the imposition of hands at the ordination of elders and deacons; the Assembly declared it to be "an ordinance of Jesus Christ still in force." The seventh subject related to the education of ministers. A fund for this special purpose was deemed "highly useful," in order the better to fit for the ministry "those who are blessed with promising gifts; and also for furnishing others, who have not time to attain to a knowledge of the tongues, and some other parts of useful learning, with such English books as may be thought most proper for their assistance and improvement." Each church was recommended, for this purpose, either to make collections, or offer subscriptions. The eighth resolution enjoined the frequent observance "of days of fasting and prayer, as much tending to the edification of the churches;" and suggested that not only should "each congregation" set apart such days, but that it would "sometimes be better for several churches to assemble together, when this can be conveniently attained." It is, therefore, apparent how anxious the London Assembly was to promote the peace and permanent welfare of the churches.

The next meeting was held at Joiners' Hall, in March, 1705. For some cause or other four out of the thirteen churches had meanwhile withdrawn from the London Assembly—Broad-street, Devonshire-square,* Bagnio-court, and Lorimers' Hall; and that only one other church in London had joined them: Paul's-alley, Barbican, of which Mr. Richard Allen was minister. There were several other churches in London, but they also stood aloof, perhaps afraid of the possible attempt to infringe upon their congregational liberty, or weary with the too frequent discussions which unwise and self-willed men had caused in them.

Rev. Joseph Stennett was the preacher, and was also chosen moderator at this second meeting of the London Assembly. After the reading of the letters from the churches, four brethren—John Ward, pastor of Luton; Ebenezer Wilson, just invited from Broadmead, by the church near Spitalfields; Mark Key, assistant minister of Devonshire-square church; and Benjamin Cooper, of Broad-street, Wapping—requested to be present, a request which was at once complied with. The preliminary articles of the former meeting were re-adopted, and also the circular letter. They were called upon to act on the suggestion made in reference to secessions at the first meeting; the particular case being that of a congregation at Winchester House, near St. Mary Overie's Dock, Southwark. The members of this congregation were chiefly seceders from other churches in London, and who held what our Baptist historian calls "the unscriptural crudities and unhallowed opinions of Dr. Crisp."

How long the London Assembly continued its meetings is not on record, but it has been conjectured that it dwindled away after the deaths of Mr. Joseph Stennett, and Mr. John Piggott, who both died in 1713, and within a few months of each other.

* Mr. Adams, says Ivimey, took offence at some of the business of the previous Assembly, and gave a different statement of its transactions from those given by Mark Key, the assistant minister, and John Toms, who was both a minister and deacon.

CHAPTER IX.

OFFICERS OF BAPTIST CHURCHES.

THE two earliest *Confessions* show that both sections of the Baptists in the Seventeenth Century virtually recognised but two officers in connection with their churches—ministers and deacons. The words of *Smyth's Confession* on this subject are: "Christ, in His outward church, has appointed two sorts of servants, namely, some who are called pastors, teachers, elders, or bishops, who administer the word and sacrament; and some who are called deacons, men and women, whose office it is to serve tables, and to wash the feet of the saints." Acts vi. 2-4; Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 2-8 (Article lxxviii.) The *Confession of the Seven Churches* also declares: "That Christ hath given the church power, for their well-being, to choose among themselves meet persons for pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons, being qualified according to the Word, as those which Christ hath appointed in His Testament, for the feeding, governing, serving, and building up of His church; and that none have power to impose on them, either these, or any other." (Article xxxvi.)

Elders, or Ministers,

as we have seen from the last chapter, were set apart to their office by "the laying on of hands;" and in many churches two ministers, in some churches even four, were associated with one religious society. In fact, a plurality of pastors, or

elders, was very common during the time of the Stuarts, both among General and Particular Baptists. The first and earlier section of the Denomination adopted special methods for discovering and cultivating ministerial abilities. During the Civil War, they had stated public occasions for the discussion of religious subjects, in which any one was at liberty to propose or to defend his own opinions. But these meetings were afterwards succeeded by less objectionable modes of eliciting the latent talents of the members of the several churches. Regular meetings for prayer, for religious conference, and for expounding the Scriptures were established; one great object of them being, to ascertain the gifts possessed by those who took part in them. Thus, the General Baptists at Spalding agreed, "that they would meet every Wednesday evening, to seek the Lord by prayer and supplication; and that the brethren, as many of them as can, lay out themselves in such a manner for the Lord, as seems most to answer the gifts given them of the Lord, that so a discovery may be made of that precious treasure of preaching and expounding the word, which, it is hoped, may tend to the glorifying of our Heavenly Father, and the edifying of one another." In the General Baptist church at Shad Thames, the younger brethren were encouraged to assemble at the meeting-house every Lord's-day morning, "to improve their spiritual gifts and graces, to the edifying of such as should give attendance." If any one of the speakers at these meetings gave evidence of possessing a ready gift of speech, and a fair measure of ability, his name was reported to the church meeting. He was next invited to preach before the brethren; and if, after a suitable trial, he was generally approved, he was called by the church of which he was a member to the work of the ministry. At first he was employed occasionally, during which stage he was described as "a gifted brother." * If his conduct and abilities appeared to warrant,

* "*Gifted brother.*—It is his duty to minister or exercise his gift in the church whereof he is a member (1 Cor. xiv. 29, 30, 31; 1 Pet. iv. 10; and 1

he was next called to the regular discharge of the office of pastor, and was now styled, "a brother confirmed in the ministry."

Similar meetings were held in Bristol at the outbreak of the Civil War. In the *Broadmead Records* we are told, that "ye church mett every fifth day of ye week, sometimes at one place, and sometimes at another of ye members' houses . . . . This was a meeting for Conference, that was for divers or any of the brethren to speake unto a question propounded from some place of Holy Scripture: that so there was liberty for any brother (and for any sister by a brother), to propose his doubt of, or their desire of, understanding any portion of Scripture; and ye rest of ye brethren (especially ye officers of ye congregation), one by one, would speak to ye answering of ye question, according as ye Lord did hint upon their spirits, and then be silent, and another speak, and soe a third, according to what was commanded of the churches, 1 Cor. xiv. 30, 31, 33. By this means and practice that ye fifth day, or ye weekly meeting, was always managed by way of Conference, these seven benefits did redound to ye glory of God, and ye well-being of ye church:—*First*, by this meeting for any brother to speak to any Scripture upon his heart, or to any question that was proposed, that was judged meet by ye elders for ye churches' edification (those were rejected if any tended to vain jangling); first,

Thess. v. 11); but not his duty to preach to the world, nor to go forth to preach before he hath a call to the work, nor hath not power to baptize (although he hath the gift to preach), until he be sent forth to preach the word. Then he hath, by virtue of that mission, power to baptize also."—*Broadmead Records* (Rev. N. Haycroft), p. 203.

The same custom prevailed among the General Baptist churches, and "gifted men" who had taken liberty, without the consent of the churches or elders to whom they belonged, "to go to and fro and preach," were regarded as acting "contrary to all good order;" and one General Assembly expressly declared, "that they ought to be suppressed, being of a dangerous consequence." —*MS. Proceedings of the General Assembly*, 1698 and 1719.

this benefit was found, that many dark Scriptures were opened. *Secondly:* Many souls had their doubts resolved, especially concerning their interest in Christ and their eternal state, when they heard ye doubts and experiences of others discovered. *Thirdly:* Many cases of conscience were answered, what to doe, or not to doe, that in their conversations they might know how to carry it to their Heavenly Father, and their neighbour, in divers cases, to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and man. *Fourthly:* Light in ye church much increased, to ye clearing of their understandings in matters of faith and practice. . . . *Fifthly:* Many souls in ye church were confirmed and established that it was the grace of God wherein they stood. . . . *Sixthly:* By this meeting many brethren that seemed to have no gift were discovered to have a very spiritual understanding, and a good utterance, to ye mutual edification of ye church, so that those gifts and graces that lay dormant and hidden were brought forth. . . . *Seventhly* and lastly (though more might be named)—this benefit followed, that those gifts that were discovered were increased, and their knowledge much enlarged, and some enabled in process of time (being trained up by these meetings of Conference), to hold forth ye word of life publickly, if there were occasion of necessity, to ye building up of ye church, and converting of several souls." *

From some "breviates" in answer to a case presented by the church at Burnham, Essex, to the General Assembly of General Baptists, in 1704, it appears that the churches had to be reminded of their recognised duties "on this subject,"—calling out ministers. "The breviates" are curious enough to be worth reproducing, especially as they still further illustrate the practice of the General Baptist churches. "1. Every brother who doth conclude that he hath a gift to be improved for the benefit of the church,

* *Broadmead Records.* (Edited by Rev. N. Haycroft.) Pp. 28, 29.

ought to be permitted to express the same, in private meeting for approbation. 2. Every such brother ought to submit to the judgment of the church to improve his gift as they shall think meet. 3. If upon such a brother exercising his gift, for some time, the major part of the church do approbate the same, and do desire him by his gift to serve the church, we think that he is then lawfully called to the work, and ought to do it. 4. But if the major part do not think him so gifted as to preach in a publick meeting, that then the gifted brother and the minor part of the church are to be contented with his private exercise; until the Lord shall please to endue him with greater ability for the public ministry. 5. But if the brother approved by the major part of the church be called to the publick ministry, the minor part ought not to discourage such a brother, neither by words nor actions, but to keep their place in the church, and quietly sit down under a minister so approved. 6. That such persons who shall wilfully absent themselves from the meeting, when some brother so approved by the major part do preach to the grief and discouragement of the said preaching brother, do act disorderly, and are worthy of reproof. 7. We look upon it to be the duty of every member of Christ's Church to love and encourage every gifted brother, and to pray for him, with all seriousness; which may be the means to prevail with God to enlarge their gifts, and to send forth more labourers."*

The anxiety of the Particular Baptist Assembly to establish a fund for the support of men who showed aptness to learn, has already been noticed. But it has too commonly been supposed that the General Baptists were unfriendly to an educated ministry. There are abundant proofs to the contrary. "It is nowhere said," observes Joseph Hooke, an elder among them in the last days of Charles the Second, "in the Word of God,

* *MS. Proceedings of the Assembly.* Vol. I. p. 25.

'Let a bishop be an academic, a rhetorician, a logician, a graduate;' but it is said, 'A bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach, &c.' And when we find men thus qualified according to the mind of God, we choose them to the ministry, whether they have or not been bred at the University. . . . Let none mistake me, as though I should despise human learning, as some have done in a passionate zeal, because of its abuses, and others through sottish ignorance, being themselves strangers to it. No. *I love and honour human learning, and give it my approbation; only, I would not have more ascribed to it than is due;* nor, by any means, that it should be preferred above Divine learning, but only attended upon as a servant."* The *Somerset Confession* also says in its twenty-third article: "We readily grant that the learning of the languages, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, &c., may be useful in its place, as a servant to help; but to make it a qualification absolutely necessary to the being a minister, we dare not." The article then adduces several reasons for this statement; for example: the lack of learning in the Apostles (although they seem to have overlooked the significant fact that the Apostles had given them, by supernatural power, what men now acquire by painful study); the absence of this among the qualifications for elders mentioned in the New Testament; the usefulness in the church of "men unlearned in the languages;" and the misuse which learned men have often made of their acquirements.

There was quite as much order observed by the General Baptists in setting apart their elders or bishops as the Bristol General Assembly of Particular Baptist churches desired in 1693. "None are ordained among us," to quote again from Joseph Hooke, "before they be chosen by the free consent of the whole church; or at, least, of the major part. And good cause it is, where all are equally concerned, that they should be equally satisfied in the choice of such to whom they commit

* Hooke's *Necessary Apology*, pp. 58-62.

their souls." The elder was not permitted to exercise the duties of his office until he had been regularly set apart by fasting and prayer, with the imposition of hands. The ordination was often a season of great solemnity. The whole congregation were called to unite in the duties and the devotions of the day; and the neighbouring elders, and also the messengers were invited to take a part in it. Nor was it unusual for sister congregations to hold a solemn Assembly at the same time, to wrestle with God in prayer, that He would crown the union with His blessing.

Moreover, when the union between elder and people had once been formed, it was deemed sacred. Seldom do we read of the pastors of the early Baptist churches removing from one place to another. Some regard the tie as indissoluble as marriage, and only to be severed by death, or by the apostacy of the elder. In the Lincolnshire General Baptist Association in 1696, it was resolved: "That there is nothing which we can justly fix upon that can warrant an elder to forsake his people: nor can any elder, who has gone away from his own people, be established as an elder over another people in another place." The same Association also declared, that "an elder, for a sinful life, for false teaching, might be put from his office;" and that though, "after his fall he should prove a sound and good man, he may be taken into the church as a member, but must not act in another place," nor yet there again, "in the capacity of an elder." The General Assembly of General Baptists in 1716 passed a resolution which still further illustrates their strictness in dealing with erring ministers: "It is agreed by this Assembly, that a person ordained to the office of an elder, and being afterwards dismissed from the church where he was so, and shall take upon him to act as an elder in any one or more churches, is disorder; but to do this without taking a membership in the church where he so acts, is a very great disorder."*

* *MS. Proceedings of the General Assembly*, Vol I. p. 55.

It was also deemed a disqualification for eldership if the wife of the person proposed to be elected to that office were not a member of the church.*

On the subject of the maintenance of their ministers, both sections of the denomination did not originally agree, although many ministers in each served their churches gratuitously. In the former part of the Seventeenth Century most of the General Baptist ministers carried on some business, by which they supported themselves and their families. From their earliest records, it does not appear that they received anything from their congregations, except travelling expenses, and these often on the narrowest scale. In 1656 messengers were sent by the "friends at Stamford," "to stir up" different districts,—"William Juge and Thomas Cristian, for Leicester, and to stir up Earl Shilton and Mount Sorrill; John Kirby for Nottingham, and to stir up Wingford and Rimson; Isaac Spence and Christopher Bell for Peterborough, and to stir up Wisbeach and Fenystanton; Benjamin Morley and Francis Stanley for Ravensthorpe, and to stir up Newton, and as many as they can; George More for Whitwell and Markfield, and to stir up Twyford; John Wilkinson to stir up Langtoft, Thurlby, and Bitome:"—and it was decreed that the churches should defray the charges of their families, and "that our beloved brethren shall have *ten shillings a week for themselves and their families.*" This was to cover their own travelling expenses, and the cost of their families' maintenance during their absence.

When, however, the increase of the church, or other circumstances, rendered it absolutely necessary that the elder should be supported, in whole, or in part, it was in many places yielded to reluctantly. So late as 1679 it was considered at Berkhampstead an opinion worthy of special censure for any member to affirm "that men ought to have a set maintenance, by the year, for preaching." Francis Stanley, who long laboured among the General Baptists, "without being chargeable to any," tells

* *MS. Proceedings of the General Assembly*, Vol ii. p. 55.

us, on his own knowledge, "that some ministers had spent the great part of their outward substance in the service of the churches; some their all; and some more than their all, many being reduced to the affecting strait, either to neglect the worthy work of the Gospel, or else to be reputed worse than infidels (1 Tim. v. 8)." The earnest expostulations which the zealous and self-denying Stanley addressed to the churches on this subject drew out this gentle admonition from Thomas Grantham: "Let the baptized churches be exhorted to consider that, whilst others have exceeded, they have been too short, in caring for their ministers, who, though they have generally with great cheerfulness served them in the Gospel of God freely, yet *that will not justify the churches' neglect of their duty*. And besides, the ministry are rendered, by this neglect, less capable to serve them, being generally much diverted by worldly employments from that serious study and exercise of reading which ordinarily conduces much to the furtherance of the Gospel, in the more ample preaching thereof." Grantham's account of "the portion," as he calls it, "to be communicate," is thus stated: "It ought to be such as (in strictness of equity) may keep the minister indemnified in his domestic concerns; else he goeth a warfare at his own charge: but of that he ought to be disburthened, save only in a case of common calamity, and these the minister, as well as the soldier, must suffer with the rest; yea, then it will become him to lead the way, and teaching the church to take joyfully the spoiling of his goods, by his heroic and cheerful example." Grantham's life shows us a striking example of his own words. He quotes with evident gusto, in his chapter on "the low outward condition of the ancient bishops of the Church, an apology for the present bishops or elders in the baptized Churches," the conduct of Chrysostom who "whilst he was more strong in the body, used to travel on foot to visit his flock. But what would the people have said, had his servant gone bare before him? or if the Emperor had held his stirrup, or led his horse! or

else, if he had rid in his coach with six horses, with a train to attend him like a prince?" "Even the British bishops at the Council at Ariminum," says Grantham, "were kept at the Emperor's charge, and their revenue at home was very moderate, being supplied by the milk of three cows for a bishop; and when any of them became dry, the people took that, and supplied them with another. I mention not these things, as if the Lord's servants in the ministry may not use convenient things of this life; for doubtless 'the workman is worthy of his meat,' and God that 'provides for the ox that treadeth out the corn,' hath provided in that rational law for His ministers. But this I will say, that it is hard for a bishop to be very rich and very good, otherwise our Saviour would have chosen such."

The General Baptists, therefore, did at last, and after some years, imitate their brethren "who owned personal election and final perseverance." The thirty-ninth article of the *Confession of the Seven Churches* declares "that the ministers ought to have whatsoever they shall need, supplied freely by the Church, that, according to Christ's ordinance, they that preach the Gospel shall live of the Gospel, by the law of Christ." The *Somerset Confession* speaks out more emphatically on the subject:—"A minister labouring in the word and doctrine, has power to receive a livelihood from their brethren, whose duty it is to provide a comfortable subsistence for them, if they be able, to whom, for Christ's sake, they are servants. . . . Yet it is commendable in cases of necessity for them, for example's sake, and that they may be able to support the weak, to labour and work with their own hands" (Article xxii.). The endorsement, by the first General Assembly of the Calvinistic Baptist churches of Benjamin Keach's book on *Ministerial Maintenance*, shows that the General Baptists were not alone in needing education on this question. Keach indeed affirms in his pamphlet that there were some churches "that did unanimously conclude and declare, that for a Gospel minister

to have a yearly allowance, or a competent maintenance, was a human invention, and anti-Christian."

The *Confession* of the first Particular Baptist General Assembly does, however, very precisely mark out the duties of the churches in relation to their ministers:—"The work of the pastors being constantly to attend the service of Christ in His churches, in the ministry of the Word and prayer, with watching for their souls, as they must give an account to Him, it is incumbent on the churches, not only to give them all due respect, *but also to communicate unto them in all good things, according to their ability, so as they may have a comfortable supply*, without being themselves entangled in worldly affairs; and may also be capable of exercising hospitality towards others; and this is required by the law of nature, and by the express order of our Lord Jesus, who hath ordained, that they that preach the Gospel shall live of the Gospel."*

The General Assembly of the General Baptists in 1704, was compelled to look at the question of "ministers' maintenance" in a practical manner. The churches in Kent sent to the Assembly to say, that "they were in a sinking and languishing condition;" and one reason assigned was, "the want of making provision for a Gospel ministry, as the Scriptures enjoined, and was practised in the primitive state of the church." The Assembly, therefore, advised: (1) "That able and gifted persons be chosen and appointed to inform the churches in general of the duty, according to the Scriptures, to make provision for a Gospel ministry, and that the ministers be strictly enjoined in their respective churches to be diligent in this work. (2) That every congregation choose and appoint a person, or persons, to collect or gather at his, her, or their discretion, such moneys as shall be given for the use aforesaid,

* A singular question was proposed to the General Assembly of the General Baptists in 1697: "Whether it was lawful for an elder or messenger to rent a parsonage, and receive tithes?" The Assembly agreed, "That in some cases it might be lawful; but that in all cases it was very inconvenient."—*MS. Proceedings of the General Assembly*, Vol. i. p. 13.

once a month, or as often as convenient. (3) That all such moneys so collected shall be delivered into the hands of a treasurer, or treasurers, as are chosen by an Association, or other churches distinct, according as they think convenient; and that such treasurer or treasurers, by and with the consent and direction of the aforesaid Association, or churches distinct, shall apply or dispose of the said moneys for encouraging and supporting a Gospel ministry, as aforesaid, and to no other uses whatsoever; and that the said collections shall not hinder or prevent raising a stock to be brought to the General Assembly, for the messengers, or travelling ministers."*

The *Records* of the Broadmead Church contain several instances of the liberal disposition of its members towards one of their ministers. In view of Mr. Hardcastle's settlement among them, 1671, each member was sent, "one by one, into a separate room where an elder and brother were," to state in writing what they would freely offer and promise. "Of those who subscribed to the pastor's maintenance," say the *Records*, "there was to be observed the grace of God in some. One aged brother named Henry Pierce, a very mean and poor man to appearance in person and habit, and by profession or trade but a journeyman shoemaker, that lived up in a cockloft; yet his heart was so enlarged for and by the Lord, that he would subscribe and did pay, not less than twenty shillings per annum." Another case is that of Margaret Webb, "that had two children to maintain, that lived very meane, that took great care to carry the world about to live therein honestly towards all, and laboured very hard so to do." She also "subscribed and did pay forty shilling per year." The *Records* add, after giving these facts—"which examples did provoke, if not shame, many others."†

* *MS. Proceedings of the General Assembly*, Vol. i. p. 27.

† *Broadmead Records* (Rev. N. Haycroft), p. 79. Making allowance for the difference in the value of money, the shoemaker gave at least £3, and Margaret Webb £6 per annum.

In addition to the elders, or ministers, there were

Messengers, or Apostles.

These men were not, in any single respect, like the "messengers" of our own day; that is, merely delegates appointed by individual churches to represent them at their yearly County Associations. The men who were styled messengers by the early English Baptists, were entrusted with grave and responsible duties. At first they were chiefly employed as itinerant preachers, having already served in the office of elder. The nation, in the time of Charles the First, needed everywhere evangelising. The settled pastors could not undertake this work without neglecting the claims of their several churches; and it was deemed, by both sections of the Baptists, irregular for others to do it who were not specially appointed. Hence arose the office of "Messengers," or as Grantham calls them, "Apostles." "Though it is most certain," he says, "that there are several things proper and peculiar to the first and chief Apostles, not to be pretended at all by their successors, the subordinate messengers, yet it is also true that many things pertaining to their office as itinerate ministers, are of perpetual duration in the Church with respect to that holy function, and consequently to descend to those who succeeded them as *travelling ministers, to plant churches, and to settle those in order who are as sheep without a shepherd.*" Grantham devotes a long chapter to "the defence of the subordinate Apostles of Christ, or messengers of His Churches;" and in this he says he will not scruple "to call old things by their old names." "For men to strain more at the word apostle (as some do at the word bishop) than at the work or office signified thereby, is no other thing (as I conceive), than groundless humility, or hypercritical subtilty, seeing it is evident that these titles are as lowly as any that can be given to suit with the matter thereby intended; *apostle*, signifying a *messenger*, or *sent*, and *bishop*, importing an *overseer*."

He carefully shows in what respects there are now no Apostles: none, that is, like "the Twelve"—who were sent "in their immediate mission, which was so much like the mission of our great Apostle, Christ Himself; learned their doctrine from the lips of Christ, or received it by infallible revelations of the Holy Ghost, and were not taught by man; laid an infallible foundation, and delivered rules for government, which all other teachers were to build upon and observe as their pattern and standard; and were necessarily endowed with gifts of tongues, miracles, signs, and mighty deeds." But, notwithstanding this, "God hath given to His Church a ministry of Messengers, or Apostles (though much inferior), yet truly to succeed the first Apostles in such things as are ordinary and fixed to that office; namely, (1) in respect of lawful power and authority to preach the Gospel in all places, at all times, to all persons, as occasion and opportunity by God's providence shall be given them; (2) unwearied diligence in teaching and strengthening both pastors and churches (chiefly those which are but newly settled in the faith) in all the counsel of God; and by labouring to perfect that which is lacking concerning the faith of any churches; (3) in being set for a defence of the Gospel, or doctrine once delivered, against all false Apostles, or such as would introduce false doctrines; and also to strengthen the hands of particular pastors against usurpers, or such as despise the ministers of Christ." He next proceeds to show at large that the "Apostles have such to succeed them in their Apostleship in these and the like services:" (1) from the perpetuity of every part of Christ's commission; (2) from the duration of those spiritual gifts which Christ obtained and gave to His Church by virtue of His ascension; (3) from the order and state of the primitive churches, their having such Apostles or Messengers, and the non-abrogation thereof, by good authority to this day; (4) from the practice of those who most question the being of a ministry of messengers or Apostles in the churches at this day;

and (5) from the state of the world, their necessity, to be taught the truth as it is in Jesus, and the danger they lie under by means of false Apostles. Epaphroditus, Barnabas, Luke, Mark, Silas, Tichicus, Trophimus, and Apollos, the General Baptist Apologist contends, were all of them "this sort of minister." He best sums up his whole exposition in regard to these particular officers by saying, "That as God hath given to His Church a fixed ministry of bishops, elders, pastors, &c., to take care of particular churches, so He *hath given her a travelling ministry, fixed, in respect of particular societies, to whom it pertains, by virtue of their office, to take all occasions to cause the light of the glorious Gospel to shine unto such as sit in darkness, to plant churches, to confirm or settle them in the faith, to visit and comfort those who have believed through grace.*"

Not only were messengers, or Apostles, sent out by the General Baptists to different parts of England; but there are instances of messengers being dispatched to preach the Gospel in Ireland, and even in Virginia, and South Carolina. A Mr. Haywood was "ordained by the General Assembly" to the last-mentioned place in 1739.* The minutes of the Assembly abound with applications, on the part of individual churches to the Assembly for the appointment of messengers, and with suggestions to the churches by the Assembly, that they should "look out suitable men among them" to be nominated to that office.

Although the Particular Baptists, so far as we have been able to ascertain, never adopted the title of Apostle; yet they had, in the days of the Civil War, and long afterwards, persons set apart to the work of itinerant preaching, and the general superintendency of particular districts and churches. Thomas Collier, as we have seen, occupied some such office in the West of England; but the number of men who were called to these duties among the General Baptists was much larger than among the churches "owing personal election and final perse-

* *MS. Proceedings of the General Assembly*, Vol. ii. p. 52.

verance." Less than a hundred years ago a General Baptist Association at Coningsby gave this definition of the special duties of the office:—"The messenger who is chosen by the unanimous consent and approbation of the churches, and which stand in close connection together, hath full power and authority, according to the Gospel, to freely enquire into the state of the churches respecting both the pastors and the people; to see that the pastors do their duty in their places, and the people theirs. He is to exhort, admonish, and reprove, both the one and the other, as occasion calls for. In virtue of his office, he is to watch over the several flocks committed to his charge; to see that good order and government be carefully and constantly kept up and maintained in the churches, he is called and appointed to look after and watch over; to labour to keep out the innovations in doctrine, worship, and discipline, and to stand up in the defence of the Gospel."

It is true that the churches in any given district* did themselves select their own messenger (with the consent of the Local Association or General Assembly, from whom he was sent), and that he was solemnly set apart for his office with prayer and fasting; but it is difficult to see, notwithstanding all that Grantham says in its favour, how the independency of the several churches could be preserved under such an office. It was an episcopacy, a presbytery, and an inquisition, all in one. The irksomeness of a rule like this to congregational churches was a sure presage of its extinction. Whatever advantage there might be in it at the time that the churches were feeble, widely scattered, and but ill supplied with stated ministers, the very growth of the churches themselves, and the gradual increase in the quality of the ministrations to which they listened, would, apart from the inquisitorial and offensive

* The General Assembly in 1756 declared, "that the messenger's office extends itself equally over all the baptized churches who request their assistance."—*MS. Proceedings of the General Assembly*, Vol. ii.

character of such a supervision, ultimately supersede any necessity for its existence.

Deacons; Helps in government.

In the citation already given from *Smyth's Confession*, we have learnt, that "the second sort of servant in Christ's outward church are called deacons, men and women whose office it is to serve tables, and wash the feet of the saints." Grantham is more explicit in describing their "office." "The deacon's office," he tells us, "is a sacred ministry, and a holy trust or calling in the Church of Christ, being also comprehended in the apostolical office, and by them exercised till the opportunity of preaching and prayer was so great, that they could not attend the service at table (Acts vi.) Whereupon seven men were chosen by the Church to wait upon the deacon's office, and solemnly ordained to that employment by the imposition of hands. Hence we gather the Divine institution of the office itself. For the Apostles had no power to make civil officers, or to appoint men to any trust in the magistracy; but they acted here as ministers of Christ, and therefore their ordination, being an act of power, must needs be of Divine authority. And the same appears from those Divine rules left us by the Apostle touching their qualification to this sacred office, being for the most part the same which is given in the case of the election of bishops (1 Tim. iii.).

"Though their office do more precisely engage them to take care of the necessities of the poor in the Christian churches, in a faithful distribution of the alms of the faithful people, &c., yet I see no reason to doubt but they were greatly concerned in all the matters of religion, as *helps to Government*. Yea, these are the most likely to be intended by these expressions, especially the first, to wit, helps; for even therefore were they chosen to assist the Apostles in the work of the ministry. And sith they are not only to be men of honest report, but also full of the Holy Spirit, it may inform us that they were to be con-

cerned in the mystery of the faith; as it is also said, 1 Tim. iii., 'He that hath used the office of a deacon well, hath purchased to himself a good degree, and great boldness in the faith;' which implies a liberty, or great freedom to preach the faith, or mystery of the Gospel.

"The ancients, and particularly Tertullian, in his book *Of Baptism*, informs us that 'the deacons had authority to baptize;' yet, saith he, 'it was by the appointment of the bishop.' But this was only for preventing inconveniences; for unless God allowed him to do this, the bishop could not impower him. It is true, the Holy Scripture doth but hint at these things, and therefore we shall not be peremptory; only considering, that a liberty in ministering the Word in the churches is allowed persons upon the account of God's gifts received, though not ordained to any office, it must needs be rather greater on the deacons' part who are chosen and ordained to serve the churches of Christ in things pertaining to the ministry.

"In this office we see the wisdom and goodness of God to the poor of His flock, in providing a distinct office in His Church for their sake especially. And, therefore, let His Church take heed they despise them not, but know that God hath chosen the poor of this world. And let His people cheerfully communicate to their necessities, that God may bless them, and cause all His grace to abound towards them" (2 Cor. ix. 6, 7, 8). For 'such as sow sparingly' must expect 'to reap sparingly.' Yea, to do good, and to communicate according to the will of God, is to sow to the Spirit; and the way, not only to reap blessings here, but in the end to obtain eternal life (Luke xiv. 14). 'And thou shalt be blessed; for they (the poor) cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.' And let the deacons bless God for that He hath counted them worthy to be put into this ministry; for they do not so much wait upon the poor as on the Lord; they shall shortly find that Christ will

account their visits to His poor as His own visits. Let them also mark the temper of those whom they visit, and put them in mind of that thankfulness which they owe to God, who hath so graciously provided for them; and let the poor requite their brethren with their prayers to God. They may show both a grateful mind, and prevail with Him for a blessing, who 'both giveth seed to the sower, and bread to the eater,' and blessed the seed sown. Let them beware of a covetous and murmuring spirit, lest the Lord see it, and it displease Him, and He reject them, as unworthy of His provision.

"It is here also to be observed, that we hear not a word of archdeacons and subdeacons, nor find any such creatures in the primitive churches. Men have found out this device to the great abuse of God's ordinance, to the neglecting the poor; yea, rather, to the grinding of their faces, than the relieving of them, according to the meaning of this sacred institution. In the meantime, those archdeacons live in great state, as even not knowing what belongs to the simplicity of the Gospel, or the nature of this self-abusing office, being rather such as are ministered unto, than devoting themselves to minister to others. Whilst the civil magistrate is constrained to take care of the poor, and to appoint overseers for them, as if this were a work too low for a minister of Christ. But blessed Paul was of another mind (Gal. ii. 10), 'Only they would that we should remember the poor, the same which I also was forward to do.'"

Grantham claims for "the baptized churches" "the only true ordination" both of bishops and deacons; since "they only have true baptism;" "they only have due election of officers;" they only "the true form, or order, of ordination." The right of the people to elect their officers, he says, has been invaded "by great personages and magistrates," and by "the rich and strong." But "now this privilege is restored and maintained in the baptized churches, where none are elected messengers, bishops, or deacons without the free choice of the

brotherhood where such elections are made. And after such election of persons of known integrity and competent ability, we proceed to ordination, with fasting and prayer, and the laying on of hands, . . . all which apostolical practices are religiously observed in the baptized churches, without any devised adjuncts or ceremonies of our own, or others."

It will be observed, that the main duty of the deacons, according to Grantham, was the care of the poor. He speaks in a parenthesis of the deacons being "*helps in government;*" but other General Baptists more carefully define the duties of the "helps," in their relation to the elders. They were entrusted with the spiritual as well as the temporal care of a certain number of members of the church. A minute in the Biddenden church-book, of 1678, thus describes their work: "to look over and take care of the congregation in respect of their inward and outward condition—that is, to see how it stands between God and their souls, and how it is with them in respect of their outward wants." Dr. Russell speaks of the "helps to government" in one church in London, as persons who had power to act in all affairs relating to the discipline of the church; affirms that seven formed a quorum; and that four out of seven had power to determine any matter which might be brought before them. But the church which he charged with thus violating its independency afterwards denied, through its minister, that any such exceptional condition existed.

The *Confession of the Seven Churches* does not define, except in general terms, the duties of the deacon—"the elders and deacons" are "for the feeding, governing, serving, and building up of Christ's Church" (Article xxxiv.) The *Somerset Confession* is equally scanty in its description, and rather joins together than separates the definition of the offices of elder and deacon:—"The Church of Jesus Christ, with its ministry, may form among themselves, make choice of such members as are fully gifted and qualified by Christ, and approve and ordain such by fasting, prayer, and the laying on of hands (Acts xiii.

3; xiv. 23); for the performance of the several duties whereunto they are called, Acts xx. 28; Rom. xii. 6-8; 2 Tim. iv. 2; Acts vi. 3." The first General Assembly of Particular Baptists declare, in their *Confession*, "that the way appointed by Christ for the calling of any person fitted and gifted by the Holy Spirit, unto the office of bishop or elder of the church is, that he be chosen thereunto by the common suffrage of the church itself, and solemnly set apart by fasting and prayer, with imposition of the hands by the eldership of the church, if there be any before constituted therein; and of a deacon, but he be chosen by the like suffrage, and set apart by prayer, and the like imposition of hands." It will, therefore, be observed, that while both sections of the Baptists give unmistakeable evidence of holding the same opinions on the question of the election and ordination of the deacons, the Particular Baptists do not, like the General Baptists, carefully define the duties of the office, contenting themselves with general Scripture references.

There is one passage in the *Broadmead Records* on the election and duties of deacons that does, however, show the once common opinion of the Particular Baptist churches. "On the 9th Nov. 1680, brothers Robert Bodenham and Nathaniel Snead were set apart by fasting and prayer for the office of deacons, which they were before chosen to. Hands were not laid on them, because the pastor somewhat scrupled it, though it was the judgment of the church to use that ceremony for admission and confirmation. The Waste-book quotes several Scriptures, and Hooker's *Survey*, for this practice. The pastor showed them their work, and showed that the money collected should not only be for the poor, but for any other use for the good of the congregation, which had been the judgment of this church for thirty years, as brother Terrill, one of the elders, declared; but they must not lay it out without the consent of the church, or, at least, of the elders." *

* *Broadmead Records* (Rev. N. Haycroft's Ed.), p. 212.

Deaconess.

In 1678-9 the Broadmead Church, Bristol, determined to elect "four sisters of the church that were widows, each of above sixty years of age, to be deaconesses for the congregation, to look after the sick sisters (1 Tim. v. 9);" in which purpose they followed the custom not infrequently adopted both by General and Particular Baptist churches. The elders sent two sisters to ask the four who had been nominated whether they would accept the office. Three at once consented, and the fourth "was by no means unwilling," but through sickness in a relative's family was away from home. In the afterpart of the same day ("the eighteenth of the first month, 1679"), the three sisters being present with the church, "it being demanded of the church whether they would now sett them apart, which, by their silence, was granted; and it being demanded of S. Smith, S. Webb, and S. Walton, whether they were willing to bring themselves under an obligation not to marry, because of that Scripture, 1 Tim. v. 11," and their silence also giving consent, "brother Terrill, one of the ruling elders," defined their work :—

"1. To visit ye sick, to have their eye and ear open to hearken and enquire who were sick, and to visit ye sick sisters in an especiall manner, to see what they need, because it may not be soe proper for men in several cases.

"2. To visit, not only sick sisters, but sick brethren also; and therefore some conceive may be ye reason why they must be sixty years of age, that none occasion may be given; and as 1 Tim. v. 14.

"3. Not only to take care of their sick bodies, of ye brethren and sisters, but that their wants may be supplied, and therefore to make reports back of their conditions to ye elders and deacons of ye congregation.

"4. It is their duty also to speak a word to their souls, as occasion requires, for support or consolation, to build them up

in a spirituall lively faith in Jesus Christ, for, as some observe, there is not an office of Christ in His Church but is dipt in ye blood of our Lord Jesus.

"5. Some think that it is their duty to attend ye sick; and if soe, then they are to be maintained by ye church." *

After this formal statement the three deaconesses were set apart for their office by fasting and prayer. Six months after, one of these deaconesses, S. Webb, died; and the *Records* declare of her, "She left a good savour behind her; did much good with her little." Nay, more: "She laboured hard in her way of distilling waters, a small trade, and gave constantly while she lived forty shillings a year, for the pastor, and left fifty pounds to the use of the congregation."

* *Broadmead Records.* Edited by N. Haycroft (London, 1865), pp. 187, 188.

CHAPTER X.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

THE Baptists have been very careful, in all their *Confessions*, to define the character of those who constitute a Christian church. Smyth says, "The outward and visible church consists of regenerated and believing men, as much as men can judge thereof, who bring forth fruits worthy of amendment of life, although hypocrites and feigners are often hidden among the repenting" (Article lxvii). The *Confession of the Seven Churches* says: "Jesus Christ hath here on earth a spiritual kingdom, which is His church, whom He hath purchased and redeemed unto Himself as a peculiar inheritance; which church is a company of visible saints, called and separated from the world by the Word and Spirit of God, to the visible profession of the faith of the Gospel, being baptized unto that faith, and joined to the Lord and to each other by mutual agreement in the practical enjoyment of the ordinances commanded by Christ their head and King." Other and later *Confessions* agree in the main with both. But as "a holy and sanctified people," acknowledging Jesus Christ as their sole governor and king, they also regarded themselves as entrusted with the power of admonishing the disorderly, or cutting off those who should "offend." The *Confessions* of both sections of the Baptists are equally explicit on this point. *The Confession of the Seven Churches* declares: "Christ hath given power to His church to receive in and cast out any member that

deserves it; and this power is given to every congregation, and not to one particular person, either member or officer, but in relation to the whole body, in reference to their faith and fellowship; that every particular member of each church, how excellent, great, or learned soever, is subject to this censure and judgment: and that the church ought not, without great care and tenderness, and due advice, but by the rule of faith, to proceed against her members" (Articles xlii. and xliii). More briefly the *Confession* presented by the General Baptists to Charles the Second, states: "that the true church of Christ ought, after the first and second admonition, to reject heretics; and, in the name of the Lord, to withdraw from all such as profess the way of the Lord, but walk disorderly in their conversations, or in any wise cause divisions or offences, contrary to the doctrine of Christ which they had learned."

This indicates the general basis on which the discipline was founded. But the discipline itself dealt with many other things besides the exclusion of unworthy members. There was a degree of oversight of the whole members, which appears little less than inquisitorial. The muster-roll of the members was called over on certain days, with almost military strictness, as if they were an army campaigning. And so, in a spiritual sense, they deemed themselves. In the Maze Pond church, and doubtless many others in the Seventeenth Century, it was customary, before the administration of the Lord's Supper, to read over the church register, each communicant answering to his name. Absentees were visited, and, if no satisfactory account were given, they were reproved. One day, fourteen were absent, and the messengers who visited them reported that certain of them were absent "under some inward discomposures," that one had to go into the country, and that others had "differences with a member of the church," which were now in the course of being removed. The Fenstanton church also adopted this rule: "If any members of the congregation shall absent themselves from the assembly

of the same congregation upon the first day of the week, without manifesting a sufficient cause, they shall be looked upon as offenders, and be proceeded against accordingly." The Broadmead church "had all the members names engrossed in parchment, that they might be called over always at breaking bread, to see who did omit their duty." "For the prevention of jealousy," another church decrees that absent members were to "certify beforehand when any occasion hindered them from coming to the assembly." Even wives who might be "kept back by the threatenings of their husbands," were not excused, "unless they were restrained by force."

But while the men who were of "the Particular way" showed a commendable desire to preserve the purity of their several churches, the men of "the General way" carried their discipline to a degree of strictness which will now be hardly credited. The power to exercise this discipline was claimed by the whole church as such. "Mind well," says William Jeffery, "the power to judge of differences, and to deal with members, lies in the body, the church; not in the officers distinct, or apart from, the church." "It is of necessity," says Grantham, "that the church of God hath power, and a holy way allowed of God, to purge herself from evil workers." They were, therefore, anxious that as many of the members of the church as possible should be present at their "meetings for discipline;" and a neglect of them, except for very urgent reasons, was deemed worthy of censure. The church at Canterbury, for example, agreed in 1668, "that in case any member neglect such meetings as are appointed for discipline, they shall send the cause by some member that day, or otherwise declare it themselves the next first day, and upon the failure of this, the person shall be reprovable."

Strictness of Discipline.

The oversight of the several members was minute and persistent. Their general conduct, their domestic life, their business,

their connections in civil society, their recreations, and even their dress, were all deemed legitimate subjects for the strictest supervision. As it was impossible for one minister to undertake any effectual superintendence of large societies, "the General men" discouraged, in the beginning of the Seventeenth Century, the formation of large churches. "A church ought not to consist of such a multitude," says one of their earliest teachers, "as cannot have particular knowledge of one another." The difficulty of supervision was met, partly by the plurality of elders or ministers, and partly, when the societies were large, by subdividing the church-members into districts, and appointing to each a separate overseer. Sometimes the deacons undertook the work of superintendence, assisted by some experienced member of the church. At others, a number of district officers were chosen, under the general title of "helps in government." Their duties were defined as "taking particular care of each member in their respective divisions, of their conversation and carriage; taking also a strict note of what disorders may arise, and bringing them regularly before the monthly church-meetings." The "meetings for discipline" were held monthly, quarterly, or yearly, as the churches might severally determine.

The Broadmead church appointed a monthly meeting of the brethren only, to consider of persons or things amiss in the congregation, and so appointed the first sixth day of the week, or Friday, that should happen in any month; and afterwards it was altered to the first second day of the month.

Besides this formal oversight, by officers appointed for the purpose, each particular member was expected to report, at the earliest opportunity, any breach of good conduct on the part of another member, and any omission of this duty, or even delay in its execution, was declared to be "suffering sin in his brother, as obstructing his recovery, and bringing the church into communion with the sinner." To prevent, however, a frivolous or malicious use of this individual duty, the accuser

was expected to state the case in writing, to sign his name to the accusation, and to hand a copy of the charge itself to the person accused. Some of these accusations are laconic enough. We give a single illustration, a literal copy of what was presented to the Baptist church, Dockhead, shortly after the Rev. Richard Adams removed from that church to become minister of Devonshire-square :—

"Sir,—I accuse Mrs. S— of swearing and lying, and backbiting and ingratitude. ELIZA D—."

"Dec. 11, 1704."

In this case, however, the accuser, according to the law of every Baptist church, must already have twice admonished Mrs. S— ; and on her refusal to hear the second admonition, "Eliza XX—" was expected to bring the matter before the church. There are but very few cases on record of personal offences being brought thus prominently forward ; but in this instance Mrs. S— had been guilty, not only of "sinning against" her sister, but "against the Lord." "Sins which are committed directly against the Lord," says Grantham, "as idolatry, murder, whoredom, theft, drunkenness, covetousness, swearing, &c., ... are to be punished with great severity, and the church ought speedily to censure such evil-doers, as unfit for Christian society, until reformed of such impieties."

Special meetings were held immediately for dealing with any notorious and scandalous cases. If the charges were proved, the offender was excluded from the society. The "ordinance of excommunication" was always regarded as one of solemn and impressive character. The elder, "by the authority of the church, and in the name of the Lord Jesus, delivered the offender to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord." When the offender was present, this sentence was pronounced in the face of the whole assembly, was accompanied with fervent prayer to God for the offender's recovery, and with earnest and affectionate expostulations to the person excommunicated. If he

refused to attend at the summons of the church, he was visited by the elders, or messengers specially appointed, and the sentence was then pronounced over him privately, with suitable counsels and admonitions. The records of some churches show that the offender, well knowing what was in store, often kept out of the way for months together, in the vain hope that he should be forgotten.

Here is an entry from a church book :—

"On the eight-and-twentieth day of the first month (1653), Edmond Maile and John Denne met with John Martin, formerly of Hemingford, but now of Ely, who had been formerly admonished and reproved according to the rules of Scripture, but yet remaining perverse and obstinate, and we desired that we might speak with him, which he refused, and offered to go away, whereupon we desired him to stay; and he staying, we spake unto him, saying: 'You have a long time absented yourself from the congregation, denying the ordinances of God, for which you have been formerly admonished, but have not given us any satisfactory answer, but tell us that we have not God.' Here he interrupted us, saying, 'I say yet that ye have not God,' and then he went away. Whereupon we follow him, desiring to speak with him; but he said he had nothing to say to us; and offered to go away. Then we said, 'What! are you afraid to encounter with the truth?' 'The truth,' said he, 'I know none ye have;' and so he went away, whereupon we concluded, considering his former answers to our admonitions, to go after him again, and to excommunicate him; and, accordingly we went after him, and speaking with him, did excommunicate him, for these ensuing reasons, namely: first, for forsaking the assembly of the saints; secondly, for slighting and despising the ordinances of God; thirdly, for despising and contemning the reproof and admonition of the church."

The church did not consider that its duty was ended, when this formal excommunication had taken place. Certain brethren, mostly the "messengers" who delivered the sen-

tence of excommunication, were appointed from time to time to search him out, and exhort him to repent and do his first works. "It is a great question," says Grantham, "how long a person under excommunication may be admonished as a brother. It may be answered: So long as he is not debauched in life, and there is any hope of his recovery; for sith this ordinance is for the saving of the soul, we are not to be impatient, but still as we may, call upon the sinner to remember from whence he has fallen, and to repent, and to pray for his return." These visits were often repeated, until hardened or undisguised profligacy rendered the case hopeless, or death removed the unhappy offender out of the reach of the good offices of the messengers.

Some sections of the Baptists thought the church had a power of inflicting a higher kind of excommunication, which entirely cut off the offender from all possibility of reconciliation, expressed by the misread words of the Apostle, *Anathema Maranatha*. But though they claimed this power, yet they esteemed it dangerous for any society to attempt to exercise it. The *Orthodox Creed*, in its thirty-fourth article declares, after referring to "the personal and private trespasses between party and party," "but, in case there be any wicked, public, and scandalous sinners, or obstinate heretics, then the church ought speedily to convene her members, and labour to convict them of their sin and heresy, and schism, and profaneness, whatsoever it be; and after such regular suspension and due admonition, if such sinners repent not, that then, for the honour of God, and preserving the credit of religion, and in order to save the sinner's soul, and good of the church, in obedience to God's law to proceed and excommunicate the sinner, by a judicial sentence, in the name of Christ and His Church, tendering an admonition of repentance to him, with gravity, love, and authority; and all this without hypocrisy, and partiality, praying for the sinner, that his soul may be saved in the day of the Lord; and under this second

degree of withdrawing, or excommunication, to account him as a heathen or publican, that he may be ashamed. *But upon the third, and highest act of excommunication, it being a most dreadful thunderclap of God's judgment, it is most difficult for any church now to proceed in, it being difficult to know when any man hath sinned the unpardonable sin, and so to incur total cutting off from the Church.*"

In addition to the excommunication of the offender before the assembled church, or privately by messengers, it was deemed necessary, to vindicate the honour of religion, that the separation of the offender from the congregation should be openly announced to the world. This was done sometimes during the next ensuing public services of the church; but in offences of a private nature, the excommunication was stated to the church members alone, and generally at the time of holding the Lord's Supper.

The Treatment of Heretics.

Heretics were treated in the same manner. They were first privately admonished; and on refusing to take note of the first admonition, were summoned to answer the charges made against them before the assembled church. Here they were allowed to defend themselves. In 1678, for example, a minister of the church at Shad Thames was accused of preaching heresy. He was "desired to come before the congregation, and vindicate his doctrine, and to be reclaimed from so great an error." The minister obeyed, and after a full investigation, was acquitted. The person who brought the charge was treated as "a false accuser," and "ordered to make satisfaction." In the year 1696, one of the nine persons appointed as the treasurers of the fund by the first Particular Baptist General Assembly, was expelled from the church at Petty France, London, for heresy. The record of this expulsion was as follows: "Mr. Robert Bristow was rejected and cast out of the communion, after much patience exercised

towards him, and strenuous endeavours used to recover him out of dangerous errors he was fallen into; namely, the renunciation of the doctrine of the Trinity, and particularly the deity of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, and so rooting up the very foundation of the Christian religion."

The General Assembly of the General Baptists had, again and again, to admonish men who, during the close of the Seventeenth Century, were beginning to preach Socinianism. In 1692, they say, "Upon the complaint made from the brethren meeting in and about Shrewsbury of persons teaching and maintaining doctrines contrary to the Articles of Faith, the Assembly have agreed that a letter should be sent to our brother Brown, and the rest of our brethren here, and also our brother, touching the same." This letter declares their advice to be "that they call in the assistance of the sister churches of their parts, and take such method to reclaim" these persons "as shall be judged most necessary." (*MS. Proceedings of the Assembly.*)

The common "heresies" for which many were cut off from the General Baptist churches in the Seventeenth Century, were Quakerism, Calvinism, and Rantism. In Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire especially, the Quakers gave the Baptist churches perpetual trouble. In the records of one church, the ever-recurring reason for excommunication is this:—"For slighting and despising all the ordinances of the Lord; saying, that they would not be in such bondage as to observe such low and carnal things." "For utterly denying preaching, baptisms, meetings, breaking of bread, &c." "For denying the Scriptures and the ordinances of God, and for affirming that the doctrine preached and received was not the doctrine of Christ, but the doctrine of the devil." Mr. John Denne and his companion were thus greeted by Thomas Ross, at Chatteris, when they went "to admonish him a second time:"—"Baptism we disown; preaching we disown; we disown you all, with the ordinances which you practice!" In some cases, the larger

part of the village churches went bodily over from the General Baptists to the Quakers.

Occasionally, when admonishing or excommunicating the members of the church who had embraced the Quaker views, the Baptist messengers came into collision with the Quaker preachers. John Ray, for instance, tells us that in 1655, he went to Littleport "to degrade and excommunicate those two apostates, Samuel and Ezekiel Cater," who were "persons of eminence in the church"—elders, in fact; and after he had done this, he "went to the common meeting place of the town,"* "declared publicly for what purpose he had come," "preached Jesus, both in His person and ordinances," vindicating them "from those wicked whimsies and nonsensical interpretations which the Quakers put upon them," and that "when he had done, one of the Quakers did rail on* him in such a foolish, rude, and frothy manner, that he turned away without answering thereto, lest he should be like him. At which, all the Quakers boasted and derided; yet all sober and good people approved it."

The Hexham church, in a letter sent on "1st day, 1st month, 1653," to the church in Coleman Street, London, "with our reverend brethren, Mr. Hanserd Knollys and Mr. John Perry," thus writes: "We are a people brought forth in these parts of the land where iniquity doth most abound, and many deceivers are risen up; yea, even swarms in these northern parts, especially of those called Quakers, whose pernicious ways many do follow; a generation whose main design is to shatter the churches of the saints, by stealing away the tender lambs out of the fold of the Lord Jesus; crying down the Scriptures, those sacred oracles of truth, as a dead letter, and crying up the lights within, as they call it; making great shows of self-denial in a voluntary humility, and of neglecting the body, which are very taking with the weak ones; all for a

* That is, the parish church; sometimes called "The Stone House;" and by others, after George Fox, "The Steeple House."

Christ within, nothing for a Christ without." In the following year Thomas Tillam tells the church at Leominster, in another letter, that while they at Hexham are "not any of them tainted with that Arminian poison that hath so sadly infected other baptized churches, those deceived souls, called Quakers, have been very active in these parts, and have seduced two of our society, and six of the Newcastle church." It is evident from this statement that the Calvinistic Baptist churches were as much afraid of Arminianism as the General Baptist churches were of Calvinism, and that they both suffered from the teachings of the disciples of George Fox.

The *Broadmead Records* give this quaint account of the spread of Quakerism in the time of the Civil War, and the defection of one of their number:—"Sathan deceived many profane people to embrace their upstart notions of Quakerisme, under a pretence of a great degree of holinesse, by hearkening to ye light within, which they called Christ (laying aside ye manhood of our blessed Redeemer); whereas that light is but ye light of nature, which in common is planted in all mankinde —ye same with that ye Indians and ye Blackamores have, and ye remotest Indians, which know not Christ, nor ever heard of him; and they omit ye light of ye Word of ye Lord, and ye light of God's Spirit, proceeding from ye Father, by ye Word, or Holy Scriptures. Thus smoake out of ye bottomless pit arose, and ye locust doctrine came forth, as it is written (Rev. chap. ix. 2, 3, 4). At this time Dennis Hollister, a grocer in High Street, being a member of this church, the meeting for Conference on ye fifth day of ye week was usually at his house. And he was naturally a man of an high spirit, Dyotrephes-like loved to have ye pre-eminence in ye church; and at that time had great influence upon ye magistrates of ye citty, and by them was chosen to be a Parliament man for ye City of Bristol; that is, one of them called by ye Little Parliament, in ye days of Oliver Cromwell, called Lord Protector, where as God alone was the Protector of His

people (but we sinned). On this occasion Hollister, staying in London, had sucked in some principles of this upstart locust doctrine, from a sorte of people afterwards called Quakers; that when that Parliament was dissolved by Oliver, Dennis came home from London with his heart full of discontent, and his head full of poisonous new notions (as was discerned by some of ye members of ye church). And he began to vent himselfe; and at one meeting of the church, after he came down, he did blasphemously say, 'Ye Bible was ye plague of England.' From that time ye church would meet noe more at his house." *

In the year 1657 the same church tells us that it was still "conflicting with this new, upstart error of Quakerisme, *began* (*no doubt*) *by Sathan*, and carried on by his instruments, Popish seminaries, Jesuits, and some apostate professors, that had not received the truth in the love of it, and by some ignorant, bewitched, and deluded people, that knew not whereof they affirmed. And such Quakers many times would come into our meetings on ye Lord's-day, in ye open publique places, called churches, *which we had then the liberty to be in, during all ye time of Oliver's reign*, and in ye midst of ye minister's sermon, they would, with a loud voice, cry out against them, calling them hirelings and deceivers, and they would say to ye people, that they must turn to ye light within, their teacher, and that was Christ within. Thus, with many other railing and judging and condemning words they would frequently trouble us, (*shaking, trembling, and quaking, like persons in a fit of ague*), while they spake with a screaming voice, and would not cease until they were carried forth of ye place, pretending they were moved by ye Spirit to come and warn us. Thus Sathan transformed himself like an angel of light, and strove against ye true followers of Christ." †

That any of their church members should hesitate or refuse

* *Broadmead Records* (Rev. N. Haycroft), pp. 36, 37.

† Pp. 47, 48.

to confess that Christ died for all men, was regarded by the General Baptist churches as "denying the faith," and was deemed a sufficient ground for exclusion. Their baptism also was pronounced invalid, if they held Calvinistic views, as Luke Howard points out in the passage quoted from him in an earlier part of this book. "Widow Wiggs, of Dunton, in the county of Bedford," was, according to the *Records of the Fenstanton Church*, first reproved for this, among other things, by John Denne; she was next desired "to come over to the following General Meeting at Caxton Pastures, on the third day of the fifth month (1653), to speak before the congregation. After the pros and cons were heard, "Widow Wiggs" was informed "that, seeing she would not be otherwise minded, the Church could not have any fellowship or communion with her." The same *Records* also tell us of one John Matthews, "a person of some eminency," who had been to Ireland since he had left Huntingdonshire, and had preached there, "having altered his judgment," was "reproved for his sin," and "exhorted to consider from whence he had fallen, and repent and turn to the Lord." "The things affirmed by" Matthews were: "that Christ died only for the elect, even such as either do, or shall believe on Him; that God hath, from the beginning chosen a certain number of persons to Himself, to which persons He cometh with such a compulsive power, that they cannot resist; and that God hath, from the beginning, pre-ordained a certain number of persons to condemnation, from which persons he withholdeth all manner of power, so that there is not any possibility of their believing." Three several times Matthew was "reproved," but without effect. He was next summoned before "the assembly of the congregation;" but here he still resisted reproof: "Whereupon we, knowing how he denied the faith which formerly he professed, and also laboured to the utmost of his power to destroy it in all places; and likewise despised and contemned all our words of reproof and admonition, and finding no hope of

recovery, but a stubborn persisting in his evil, we delivered him under Satan."

Still later than this, that is, in 1696, this question was proposed to the General Assembly: "Whether an elder, leaving a church without their consent only for changing his opinion from the General love of God to the Particular, be irregular and worthy of blame: it was agreed in the affirmative; and that such elder may not be allowed to preach among us before he acknowledge his evil, and give satisfaction; and we advise such elders do turn to the church."*

Rantism was another source of trouble to the Baptist churches at this period. One of the victims of this singular rhapsody, a certain Mrs. Austin, of Dunton, stoutly contended with the messengers who were sent to reprove her. "She looked upon the Scriptures as nothing; she trampled them under her feet. We,"—that is, John Denne and "Brother Gilman,"—"said we were very sorry to hear her despise and speak evil of the Holy Scriptures; and desired her to take heed what she said. She answered, 'I believe you are sorry; but I glory in your trouble, being wrapt up in God;' and then much did she speak of the excellency of her condition. We told her she was deceived, for she was only deluded by the devil, and separated herself from God. She then said, 'I had as lieve be with the devil as with God Himself; and I trample faith under my feet.' Being almost amazed to hear her, we said she was one of them the Scriptures speak of which do trample under foot the Son of God—(here she interrupted, and said, 'I do so,')—and count the blood of the covenant wherewith they are sanctified, an unholy thing. She asked what we meant by 'the blood of the covenant?' We said, 'The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.' She said, 'What, He that died upon the cross at Jerusalem?' He is nothing to me. I do not care for Him!' Then, being weary with hearing her utter these, and many other wicked

* *MS. Proceedings of the Assembly.* Vol. i. p. 10.

and blasphemous speeches against the Lord God and His Son Jesus Christ, His Church, and the Holy Scriptures, we excommunicated her; and in pronouncing the sentence, we used these words: 'In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we do separate you from the Church of God, delivering you unto Satan, to whom you have yielded yourself a servant to obey.' She replied, and said, 'I rejoice to be with the devil; I had rather be with him than with you.' Then we said, 'To him we leave you with whom ye rejoice to be.' And so we departed from her."*

Samuel Fisher says, in his *Baby Baptism mere Babyism* (1653), that "Some Ranters are not ashamed to say they are Christ and God; and there is no other God than they, and what's in them; and such like blasphemies." Christ's coming is none other than "His coming into men by His spirit, or in such manifestations in men's hearts, that they may be able to live up with Him in Spirit so as no more to need such lower helps from outward administrations." But the opinions of these Seventeenth Century Ranters, so unlike the men who are now vulgarly designated by that term, are more fully to be gathered from the account given by Mr. H. Jessy, of one who, after falling from "the simplicity that is in Christ, and adopting the fullest opinions of the Ranters, repented of his errors, confesses his faults before the assembled church at Devonshire Square, over which William Kiffin was pastor, and was thereupon restored. "Truly, my friends," said this person, in his open recantation, "I cannot but speak it with much grief of spirit; I have been held by that deceiver Satan presenting lies to my spirit, under the pretence of glorious truths. And the first thing he wrought in me was an exceeding slight esteem of the Scripture, so that the best thoughts and expressions I used of the Scripture was, calling it a letter or ink and paper. And a second thing was, a Christ in me, in opposition to the Christ of God; persuading me, that to know Christ as He was declared

* *Fenstanton Records*, pp. 90, 91.

in the Scriptures, was to know Him after the flesh; so that indeed I was brought to deny any Christ at all, and did not believe that there was either angel or spirit, only was convinced by things that do appear, that there was a God; and that all His creatures received of this power and spirit, which was their life; and as man was the most excellent creature, so there is more of that spirit manifested in him than in any other creature. And when his life was taken from him, I did believe he should return to the matter of which he was made, and should neither enjoy happiness nor misery, but perish as the brutes of the earth."

John Denne and Brother Gilman, as "Messengers to divulge the Gospel of Jesus Christ," visited, among other places, Newport, in Essex, and at once sought the house of one Fordham, a tanner. They were not long before (despite his hospitable welcome) they found him largely tainted with Rantism, in its most pernicious form. "All that proceedeth from God is God," said this Essex tanner. "He also affirmed that God was darkness to some men; that Christ was all in all, and therefore there was nothing but Christ; that men were carried on to sin by the power of God." The messengers declare that he affirmed these things without any proof;" but in dealing with the last statement, they asked Fordham "Whether or no it were a sin if a man should steal his horse?" His answer is ingenious, to say the least of it. "If he took it, believing that he had a right unto him equal with himself, it was no sin; but if he did not believe he had a right unto him, then it was sin." More talk ensued; and though it was now dark and late, they whispered with one another aside as to "whether it were safe to abide in the house all night" with such a heretic. He pressed his hospitalities upon them, and hoped they would not be angry with him for his opinions; but they "departed, and went up and down the town to find a lodging in the night, which at last God provided for us," thus doing as tradition makes the Apostle John to have done, only in a slower fashion, when he

found Cerinthus, the arch heretic, was under the same roof. It is not recorded whether the Essex tanner was excommunicated at that time; but the messengers departed from Newport itself, saying, "We cannot perceive but that all fear of God, for aught we can hear, is extinct in this place." Mr. Denne was afterwards greatly needed at Canterbury, and the neighbourhood, because "vain talkers, and deceivers of mind, especially they called Ranters," were beginning to give trouble to the church. He had "snatched some of them as firebrands" out of the fire in other places; and he might be the means of doing the same there also. The church at Caxton Pastures was therefore desired to send him "to stay with them as long as the Lord shall please, there being very great need of him."

Wesleyanism.

Little less than a hundred years after this period, another form of "heresy" was troubling some of the Calvinistic Baptist churches. In September, 1742, messengers were appointed by the Broadmead church, Bristol, to visit three of their members, and "to reprove them for going frequently to hear John and Charles Wesley." They were asked "to learn by converse with them whether they had imbibed their (the Wesley's) corrupt notions." The messengers reported that the said members "had fallen into the error of general redemption, falling from grace, and sinless perfection in this life." They were therefore again deputed to tell them "that the church was very sorry to hear that they had imbibed such corrupt notions; to admonish them to read the Scriptures, and attend the preaching of the truth with us, and not where such principles were taught, that they might be brought to the knowledge of the truth; and that in the meantime we should not receive them into communion if they had confessed such principles; and that, as such notions are inconsistent with the honour that should be given to Christ at His own table, they should forbear coming to it till they were more careful of their walk, and

better principled." Again, in April, 1744, messengers were sent "to brother Davis and his wife, to inquire whether they did not receive the Lord's Supper from Mr. Wesley, as well as constantly attend his meetings."

Amusements.

In illustration of the strict oversight of the general conduct, domestic life, amusements, dress, &c., of the Baptist churches during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, some examples may be quoted. We begin with the ministers. A certain Mr. Ingello, one of the early pastors of Broadmead, Bristol, "offended"—so we learn from the *Records*—"divers members of his congregation with his flaunting apparel; for he, being a thin, spare, slender person, did goe very neate, and in costly trimm, and began to exceed in some garments not becoming ye Gospel, much lesse a minister of Christ." Nor was this his only weakness. Some of his friends were "troubled and offended because of his being given so much to music, not only at his owne house, but at houses of entertainment out of the towne; sometimes with some of his relations, and gentry of ye citty of his acquaintance, he would be at his favourite recreation." "Dealeing with him" for both "by way of admonition and entreaty" failed "to work upon him to leave his musick," or, we suppose, to alter his dress. "Take away my music," said Mr. Ingello, "and you take away my life." His reply "offended and troubled ye lively and most serious watchfull members," and their affections now "began to alienate from him, and to hearken after another." It was, doubtless, regarded as a justification of the suspicions cherished by "ye lively and most serious," that Mr. Ingello subsequently conformed, became a Doctor of Divinity, and Fellow of Eton College. He died in 1683, and was buried in the chapel of Eton College.

John Blowes, one of "the teachers in the congregation" at Eltisley, in 1658, had more muscular tastes than Mr. Ingello. Football was apparently his special delight. On a day set apart

for fasting and prayer, and the election of a deacon, John Blowes, with a singular disregard to the claims of the church, and the fitness of things, not only absented himself from the meeting, but "was one of the principal appointers in a great football play." He had before this time given the church some trouble about money matters (borrowing and not willingly paying again), and Samuel Loveday, of London, had written doubtfully about him. "I fear," said Loveday, "he is not as he ought to be." The solemn meeting from which Blowes was absent, was but scantily attended, and the elders were discouraged. However, a deacon was duly elected, and set apart for his office; when Blowes' absence being noticed, Robert Jackson explained the unseemly cause. "It was concluded a great evil" by the elders and brethren present, "that Blowes should not only be absent from the meeting, but also instrumental in the appointing such a foolish and wicked matter, and that upon a day which he knew to be set apart by the church for fasting and prayer." John Denne was at once appointed to reprove him for his conduct, and to summon him to appear "at the next general meeting to give an account thereof." The general meeting was held "on the two-and-twentieth day of the sixth month" at Fenstanton. John Denne, at this meeting, first of all offered a few words of general exhortation, and then a general reproof to the brethren for their absence on the fast day. Blowes' case now came on. Denne said, Blowes "stood to justify his actions;" but he was then present to answer for himself. It was "adjudged a great evil," this football playing of Blowes, together with his absence from the meeting of the congregation; but even then Blowes still contended that no evil had been committed. The brethren at length convinced him that he had really been guilty of "great evil," extorted a confession from him of his sin, and a promise to abstain from the like for the time to come." This did not end the subject. "Some debate was had about the matter," and the brethren resolved, "that seeing he had, first,

dishonoured the Lord; secondly, grieved the people of God; thirdly, given great occasion to the adversaries to speak reproachfully, he should not be suffered to preach, until further fruits meet for repentance did appear." Whether they "did appear" we are not told.

On the 9th of January, 1745, the Broadmead church formally declared "playing at cards to be sinful, and not to be allowed in any member of this church without censure." "The sisters," we are told, "concurred with the brethren." The General Assembly of the General Baptists in 1711 had these two questions put to it by the Lincolnshire churches: "Whether playing at cards, and earnestly contending for the same in Christian families, be a sufficient cause to deny such communion with the church to whom they belong? 2. Whether a pastor who contends for dancing and cockfighting, with many other vices, although being moderately used, be a sufficient cause for the church to deprive him of communion?" The answer given to the first question was, that if the card playing were "in opposition and in contempt of all Christian counsel and advice," it was "unbecoming;" that the card-playing was "unlawful for such as profess the Gospel of Christ, and unfits for communion." The second question was thus answered: "That for a minister of Christ to countenance, encourage, or contend for such vices, do disqualify him for the ministerial office and church communion, until he shall appear of another mind, and give satisfaction to the church of which he is pastor." *

Dress.

The love for "flaunting apparel" was evidently not confined to Mr. Ingello, for the question of dress frequently occupied the attention of "the serious, lively, and watchful," of other churches than that of Broadmead. In 1671 Grantham wrote, "The doctrine of our church about apparel is this: that

* *MS. Proceedings of the General Assembly*, vol. i., p. 41.

the adorning of Christians ought not to be that of plaiting the hair, wearing gold, and costly array, with rings and toys, as the humour of phantastick persons in city or country commonly leads them. But that instead thereof, moderation, modesty, and yet decency, according to the state and condition of persons respectively, should be observed on all sides, that so Christians might be examples to others, even in these matters. And what, though some person or persons in the church be more than ordinary set against the vain fashions of our day [it was the 'day' when lace cuffs and collars were worn by *men*], and sometimes lets their zeal go too far, is this so offensive to our brethren that they can no way bear this without such a public reprehension? I fear, in so doing, they may have done the church ~~some~~ more disservice than those whom they inveigh against. . . . What the Searchers should mean about these matters being made *essentials of communion*, I cannot imagine, unless they would have us suffer men to sin in these cases without being called upon to reform; and in case of obstinacy, to be withdrawn from the church, as disorderly persons, that they may learn to be ashamed (yet we mean not that they should be accounted as enemies, but admonished as brethren). And surely, if this be their meaning, that offenders in these cases must be let alone in their sins, we should in so doing loose the order, and in time, the essence of the churches. For, suppose now, a gallant of the times should desire to be baptized, and to walk in communion with the Searchers, only he tells them they must give him leave to marry out of the church, and allow him liberty to transgress the Apostolic decrees, in eating ~~b~~blood and things strangled, and meats offered to idols; and *therewithal he may wear gold*, and *tread in the steps of the gallants in the matter of apparel*, &c.; would the Searchers, now, admit such a person to their communion? If not, then they make these things as necessary for communion as we do." *

One of the questions put to the first General Assembly of

* *A Sigh for Peace.* By T. Grantham (London, 1671), pp. 102, 103.

the Particular Baptist Churches in 1689, was this: "Whether it were not necessary to take note of those excesses that were found in their members, *men and women*, with respect to their apparel?" The Assembly answered in the affirmative. This is their sober reply: "It is a shame for men to wear long hair, or long periwigs, and especially ministers (1 Cor. xi. 14), or strange apparel (Zeph. i. 8). That the Lord reproves the daughters of Zion for their bravery, haughtiness, and pride of their attire, walking with stretched-out necks, wanton eyes, mincing as they go (Isa. iii. 16), as if they affected tallness, as one observes of their stretched-out necks; *though some in these times seem*, by *their high dresses, to out-do them in that respect.* The Apostle Paul exhorts, in 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10, 'That women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but with good works, as becometh women professing godliness.' And 1 Pet. iii. 3, 4, 5, 'Whose adorning, let it not be the outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God of great price. For after this (fashion, or) manner, in old time, the holy women, who trusted in God, adorned themselves.' And therefore we cannot but bewail it, with much sorrow of heart, that those brethren and sisters, who have solemnly professed to deny themselves (Matt. xvi. 24), and who are by profession obliged in duty not to conform themselves to this world (Rom. xii. 2), should so much conform to the fashions of this world, and not reform themselves in those inclinations that their natures addicted them to in the days of ignorance (1 Pet. i. 14). From these considerations we earnestly desire that men and women whose souls are committed to their charge, *may be watched over in this matter, and that care be taken, and all just and due means used*, for a reformation herein; and that such who are guilty of this crying sin of pride, that abounds in the churches as well as in the nation, may be

reproved; especially considering what time and treasure are foolishly wasted in adorning the body, which would be better spent in a careful endeavour to adorn the soul; and the charge laid out upon those superfluities to relieve the necessities of the poor saints, and to promote the interest of Jesus Christ. And though we deny not but in some cases ornaments may be allowed, yet whatever ornaments in men or women are inconsistent with modesty, gravity, sobriety, and prove a scandal to religion, opening the mouths of the ungodly, ought to be cast off, being truly no ornaments to believers, but rather a defilement; and that those ministers and churches who do not endeavour after a reformation herein, are justly to be blamed."

Whatever effect was produced by this answer among the Particular Baptist Churches represented in their General Assembly, eight years after this the Assembly of the General Baptists declared, in answer to a letter from Colchester, concerning pride in men and women in wearing periwigs and high dresses, "that the ministers guilty therein be careful to reform themselves, and their families." * In the same year (1697), the church at Bessel's Green, belonging to the same community, solemnly resolved, "That all superfluity of apparel be laid aside, and that there be moderation in all things." That this resolution might be further strengthened it was also decided, "That superfluity in apparel *be publicly preached down in the congregation*, and that fathers and mothers of families endeavour to suppress it." Another minute, in the same church book, twelve months later, shows how hard the society had found it to carry out the earlier resolutions: "Agreed: that the soul-condemning sin of pride be utterly extirpated and rooted out from among us, and that all discriminating characters thereof, to wit superfluity of apparel, &c., be utterly extinguished."

In 1726, the Circular Letter of the Midland Association earnestly exhorts the members of the several churches to use

* *MS. Proceedings of the General Assembly of the General Baptist Churches in England from* 1689 *to* 1728. Vol i., p. 12.

great plainness of dress. "Beware of conforming to the world's vain customs and ridiculous fashions in your apparel, behaviour, and conduct." They are desired "to give some real light in a dark world; but it is suggested that the way to do it is not to conform to the world in the matter of dress.

Marrying out of Society.

Great stress was laid by the early Baptists on what the Quakers call "marrying in the society." Occasionally the people saved their ministers the trouble of selecting a wife, by choosing one for him, as in the case of Mr. Hazzard, of Bristol. "The good people persuade Mrs. Kelly" to accept the hand of this promising young divine. She herself, in the quaint, puritanical language of the time is described as having been "like a hee-goat before ye flock," "keeping her grocer's shop open on Christmas-days, and sitting sewing in her shop in ye midst of ye citty, in ye face of ye sun, and in ye sight of all men, even in those very days of darknesse, when, as it were, all sorts of people had a reverence of that particular day above all others." She was "a gracious woman," "like a very Deborah," "even a mother in Israel," and the first woman in "the citty of Bristol that practised that truth of ye Lord (which was then hated and odious)—separation." She, and others, "met to repeat sermon-notes, and keep prayer-days together," and in their buying and selling did speake very heavenly." Nay, she had even,—when "ye parson of ye parish" had begun to talk ritualistically, as we should now say, asserting "that pictures and images might be used,—openly, in ye presence of ye congregation, gone forth in ye midst of his sermon." A woman, plainly of some force of will and self-possession. Mr. Hazzard, it is satisfactory to know, "at *his* importunity," no less than that of the people's, afterwards won the hand of the grocer's widow "in ye High Street." She proved an excellent wife; and helped, with some others, and

her husband, to form the nucleus of what came to be afterward the Broadmead church.

In March, 1778, a "breach of promise" case was brought before the descendants of the same people. "The church," says the minute on the subject, "being informed that brother Jos. Bird, sen., having courted and engaged to marry our sister, Elizabeth Bissick, and appointed the day for the marriage, and promised to call on her at her mother's at ten o'clock, without any just cause or reason, altered his mind, and did not fulfil his engagement, and exposed himself to censure, and put her to unnecessary charge in preparing for it, and took her out of a good place;" (she was a domestic servant) the church appointed brethren Harris, Bull, and Page, to hear the case from him, and "to recommend his making such satisfaction as they judged equitable; and if he refused to do what appeared to be just, that they should let him know that he was suspended from the communion of the church till he did." Whether the dread of the church's censure, or the revival of a former affection, had the greater influence in determining the issue is not on record; but the church-book does chronicle the fact "that Jos. Bird, sen., was soon after married to Elizabeth Bissick, and so was not suspended."

Very frequently, as some of the old church-books show, members were reproved "for being yoked with those not in fellowship with us." Indeed, so frequent had marriages of this sort become in Cambridgeshire, that a solemn meeting was held on the subject at Cambridge, in 1655, and the question debated was: "*Whether, or no, it is lawful for any member of the congregation to marry with anyone out of the congregation?*" Evidently some of the unmarried brethren thought, if this question were answered in the negative, their choice of suitable or perhaps winsome helpmeets would be sadly limited; and it need not, therefore, awaken any surprise to learn that "upon this subject there was much debate." The custom already acknowledged was re-affirmed; marriages "without

the congregation" were declared unlawful; offenders against this rule were in future to be sharply reproved, "according to the rule of the Scriptures, against sinners;" and those who refused to confess their error were to be excommunicated.

One sister, Anne Pharepoint, of Erith, Huntingdon, showed no little acuteness on being reproved for breaking the established rule. When the messengers "desired to know her mind concerning that which was charged against her—namely, taking a husband contrary to the mind of the congregation," she answered that she thought it was no sin. "Indeed, I do remember," said Anne Pharepoint, "it was said in the law to the children of Israel, that they should not marry their daughters to strangers, for they will turn away their hearts from the Lord; but I have such a husband as doth not hinder me." This did not satisfy the strict notions of the messengers; and one of them therefore replied, "There was none under the law but Jews and Gentiles. All that were not of Israel were strangers. There is none but the church and the world; if your husband was not of the church, he must be of the world, and so a stranger; and if a stranger, then he will turn your heart from the Lord." (Deut. vii. 3.) Anne Pharepoint was presently won over to confess that she had done wrong, that she was greatly touched by the "desire for her welfare, and increase in the knowledge of God," and that she would come to the congregation, as they wished.

The same church, hearing of the intended marriage of another sister, Jane Johnson, with one "not a member of the congregation," did their best, by their messengers, to prevent it. Jane was "premonished," and was "dehorted therefrom," "before there was anything between them, save only the man had spoken to her to that end." There were several witnesses to her promise "never to marry him unless he altered his mind, and embraced the truth." Jane, however, "still kept company with the man." Again she was "dehorted therefrom," and reminded of her former promises; and a

second time she promised "that she would never match with him unless he should embrace the truth." The messenger now "rested awhile in his watchfulness." But his suspicions being still further aroused, he got two other friends to go with him, and persuade her from her purpose. A third time she denied that "she had any intention to match with the man;" and yet was shortly afterwards married to him. Jane Johnson was accordingly "separated from the congregation."

Sarah Browne, another sister of the same church, "removed her residence to Royston," in order to marry "out of the congregation." She was "reproved and admonished, orderly, by the brethren at Roystone;" but paying little heed to their rebukes, one of the Fenstanton elders, Edmond Mayle, came over and "sharply reproved her for her evil intentions." She was obstinate, and refused his words, as she had refused the words of the others. "The brethren in and about Caxton and Fenstanton" then sent a letter to "the faithful" at Roystone, calling attention to Satan's "wicked devices in persuading many members of the congregation to join themselves in marriage with those that are without;" and concluding with these words: "Now, brethren, touching our sister Sarai Browne, who, as we do hear, persisteth in that abominable intention, notwithstanding the reproof and admonition of the saints; we do hereby testify unto you, in the presence of God, desiring you to declare the same to her, that if she continueth in her intentions, and doth not repent of her evil, we shall not own her as a member of the Church of God, but look upon her as one justly separated from the fellowship of the saints."

The General Assembly of General Baptists in 1689 "largely debated," and, "as far as they were capable, used all endeavours to find out some larger bounds than their own community" for the selection of their wives; "but," say they, "none could be found, for marriage is God's ordinance, and honourable amongst all men. Yet God has been pleased, in all dispensations, to prescribe limits to His Church, so as the

persons to be married cannot with safety go beyond the bounds of that communion for exceeding those bounds; and we cannot find any limit at all. And to suppose that baptized believers have liberty to marry with Turks, Jews, Infidels, &c., &c., and with all sorts of pretended Christians seems extremely perilous, so that it is unlawful for a believer to marry with a non-believer." "As for proceeding with persons so offending, it was concluded to be as aforetime, only that, *as circumstances and necessity may alter cases*, so the censures against offending Christians herein should be proportioned or moderated, that justice and mercy may meet together." This was the beginning of a relaxation in the severity of the General Baptist rule in such cases. The General Assembly again and again re-affirmed that marriages "out of communion were disallowed." But in 1744 the Bessel's-green church sent a case to the Assembly on the subject, which was "not received" for public debate, because it had not "first been submitted to the sister churches, nor to any Association." Matthew Randall was, however, commissioned to reply to their letter privately; and as he was selected by the Assembly for this purpose, his letter may be regarded as expressing the still further relaxation in the general discipline of such offenders then gaining ground. "It is agreed on all hands," says Mr. Randall, "that mixed marriages are not only inexpedient, but dangerous, and sometimes lead to very bad consequences; and as such, are to be prevented, as much as may be, by all seasonable advice, watchfulness, and caution. The only difficulty is, how the church ought to deal with those members who, after all, marry out of our fellowship. And here I must acknowledge that there may be circumstances full of aggravation; as when, for instance, a person who, through mere worldly interest, shall marry out of the church, when there are in it, at the same time, those who, on all other accounts, are equally if not more deserving. *But to make it a general rule to suspend from communion all without exception*, is what I could never find defensible by the

Word of God, or the primitive practice." Mr. Randall then quotes the expression in the Epistle to the Corinthians about being "unequally yoked together," as plainly relating "to joining with the Pagans in their idolatrous feasts," and declares his opinion that "marrying only in the Lord" (1 Cor. vii. 39) "can mean no more than the profession of Christianity, in opposition to the Pagan unbelievers." He then goes on to say, "that there were three sorts and divisions among the Christians, *yet there is nothing in Scripture to forbid their intermarrying.* In the church at Corinth they were so divided as to communicate in parties; some denied the resurrection and overthrew the faith; many Christians practising the legal rites in conjunction with those of the Gospel . . . while others as strenuously asserted their freedom from the Mosaic yoke of bondage." The Jews, also, were divided into parties; but Mr. Randall finds nothing to forbid either the Jews or the Christians "from marrying into their different sorts." "These cases, I think, are nearly the same with ours at present, *and seem to mitigate the hard thoughts we have been apt to entertain of those who have transgressed in*" the old and more rigid rule. Nay, "if there should appear no direct prohibition of Christians on their first establishment from marrying with pious Jews who believed in the true God, but had not as yet embraced the Gospel," their controversy was entirely at an end.

Mr. Randall goes even further than this. He impugns the wisdom of the early discipline of the Baptists. "It deserves to be considered, whether suspension from communion for so marrying was, in point of prudence, a proper method to reclaim the offenders, or to promote the Baptist interest. There are instances not a few, of persons who, on account of such severity, have never returned to communion, nor sought after it; while meek instruction, friendship, and familiarity have often brought over even the adverse party to baptism and communion with the church; *and there are many candidates kept*

thereby from joining with such churches, till they see how Providence shall dispose of them."

He also urges that the severity which the Bessel's-green church contends for "is a very great hardship;" that "marriage has its rise and expedient from our nature and constitution. 'Tis honourable in all. . . . Now since in this nation the women are not permitted to look out for themselves, and when they have no offers from among the men of their own community, *what must they do?* Must they, on pain of excommunication, refuse every sober, virtuous, Christianlike person, *merely because he has not happened to be baptized by immersion* on *profession of faith?* Is this consistent with Christian charity and forbearance? Yea, as to both sexes," Mr. Randall says, with surprising *naivete*, "'tis scarcely possible sometimes not to transgress; *the accidental sight, or conversation of strangers, their agreeable mien, complexion, or deportment* often create such mutual liking and affection as shall render marriage almost necessary and unavoidable. When this liking and affection are *not* the motives to it, the true ends of marriage are seldom answered; the persons are rarely happy. As, therefore, the case and circumstances, the opportunities and inducements are so very different, time and chance happening to all persons, so as to render them unable to fore-determine themselves, *I think the case of marriage cannot be brought under any one strict invariable rule by the Christian Church.*"*

Domestic Life.

There is a curious case related in the *Fenstanton Record*, which strikingly proves their scrupulous fidelity. One Thomas Bedford, "who had been chosen a teacher by the brethren at Streatham, and from thence removed his habitation to Hawson, whence he married a wife," was accused, among other things, *of beating his wife in the open street.*" When

* *MS. Proceedings of the General Assembly*, vol. ii.

reproved for his cowardly and disgraceful conduct, "he regarded not the words of the messenger, "*but stood, by sophistry, to maintain it to be lawful for a man to beat his wife.*" He forgot, however, to add that, according to Blackstone (vol. i. chap. xv., p. 557), the old English law specially guards this questionable privilege of the husband by describing the correction he may give her as "*moderate*," and "*to be confined within reasonable bounds.*"

The *Broadmead Records* have also a single entry of a similar charge, although the man did not in this case "stand by sophistry to maintain it to be lawful." A whole year the church had waited patiently for some signs of amendment in Thomas Jacob, when "on the fifth day of the first month, 1677, there came late the sad tidings that the said Thomas Jacob, about ten days since, was much in drinke, and very rude, fighting in ye street, and that he had given his wife some blows, and said he would be revenged on a man that it seemed he owed a grudge to." Both Bedford and Jacob were "cast out."

It was not at all an unusual thing for churches to admonish husbands, if they were thought to be negligent in their duties to their wives. In 1663 "*John Christmas*," a member of the General Baptist Church, Warboys, "*for not loving his wife as he ought*, and for speaking hateful and despising words against her, giving her occasion to depart from him for his unkindness, after sundry admonitions, was withdrawn from." This church discipline evidently helped to bring John Christmas to a better mind; since soon after the record of his exclusion there is a second entry, which declares, "John Christmas, afterwards sending for Ann his wife again, and promising amendment, after her coming back again, desired to be a partaker of the church in holy duties, was again joined in fellowship." A hundred years afterward, the Broadmead church was informed (1765) "that brother Townsend treated his wife ill." Messengers were appointed to inquire into the report; to

admonish him for his evil conduct; and "to let him know, that unless he acknowledged his fault, and was penitent on account of it, and promised amendment, he was suspended from the church till he should give his wife satisfaction." He was also "desired to attend the next church meeting;" which desire he complied with. Some of the statements about his quarrel he denied; but he admitted that he had spoken passionately, and that his wife had provoked him. Townsend was "exhorted to cultivate a better understanding with her, and to live in love, and in the fear of God. The church agreed that the affair should remain as it was; and, if hereafter he should acknowledge his error, he should upon his request, be restored to his place." A few months after this, another domestic difference demanded attention. In this case "brother Morgan and his wife were suspended from fellowship till they should give the church satisfaction for their evil conduct." The messengers visited them, but "the wife did not discover so good a spirit as they could wish; and said, if he acted well towards her, she would towards him." The husband owned his fault; "was sorry religion should suffer through him; and hoped that he should be more watchful for the time to come." "Brother Morgan" was restored to fellowship; but "sister Morgan," still showing an unwillingness to confess her error, remained "suspended."

It is hard, in the following case, to determine the exact measure of guilt in either offender: "1685: Edward Grimes' wife, a member of the same church as John Christmas, for going from her husband from place to place, and speaking reproachful words against him, was admonished for it several times. At length she was reproved openly before the church; and she set down her resolution not to live with him again, *although he promised to amend, and allow her needful things.*" She was at length "withdrawn from," and her husband was reproved, at the same time, "for being churlish to his wife, and not allowing her needful things."

Servants.

The servants in former days were not always models of good behaviour, and so did not escape church discipline. A minister of a Baptist society in the Fen country in 1654, had to complain of "our sister, Elizabeth Noble, who being lately my servant, was at that time altogether disobedient, sometimes replying that she would not do what she was commanded, and at other times, being negligent, left it undone. And moreover, as an aggravation to her faults, she went away out of my service, contrary to my will, and without my knowledge." Private reproof being twice unheeded, Elizabeth Noble was publicly admonished and reproved by the whole congregation. Under this very formidable ordeal she repented; but her father, who was present, was greatly incensed, "broke out into a very great passion," and even "charged the minister with partiality." It was now John Noble's turn to be reproved, "but he refused to hearken thereunto, and increased more and more in passion." He was calmly advised to "withdraw for the present, and seek unto God for wisdom." To this, he very snappishly replied, "that he could that, without the teaching of the congregation; and so departed." A second and a third time the angry father was "reproved and admonished;" and at last, "with much sorrow and contrition, he confessed his faults" and was "reconciled."

Another servant, one Joan Parker, who lived "with our sister Smith, of Hollywell, ran away from her service, not making either her master or dame acquainted therewith." Thomas Cox and Thomas Phillips are sent "sharply to reprove her for it," and to demand "that she give satisfaction to her master." The messengers purposed to go to her father's house "to speak with her;" but as they were going they accidentally heard that Joan was living in service "with the miller at Papworth St. Agnes." Thither accordingly the two messengers go; but as they were approaching the miller's

house, Joan "accidentally espied them," and "went out of the way." A second visit proved equally unsuccessful. "They found her at home, but she refused to speak with us, or to give any account of her former disorder." The miller also, "her master," refused to permit the messengers to come into his house. "The congregation," we are told, "hearing this relation, adjudged it a heinous sin in her;" but nothing further was then resolved concerning Joan. At a later meeting, refusing still to see the messengers, and continuing to absent herself from the congregation, she "was esteemed an excommunicated person."

About twenty-four years later than this date, the St. Albans church had to deal with another case of neglect of duty on the part of a servant: "Brother Osman, recorded inhabitant of Wheathampstead, was by his month of harvest, where he did shamefully, and with others, betray his trust, left his work, his master not being there, and went to an ale-house, where he spent most of the day in sinning against God, and spending his money, which should relieve his family, in excessive drinking. He being a servant at a brother's house, the said brother could not do less than declare it to the church, though to his great trouble." Osman was "withdrawn from" by the church; but in March of the next year, he made public confession of his fall, and was restored.

Drunkenness.

It is sad to find how many were excluded, both from the Broadmead church and other churches, for drunkenness. For example: "Philip Sciphard, was cast out, after divers times dealing with (according to the rule of the Lord), for his scandalous walking in excess of drinking, though he several times covered, evaded, and justified himself, for want of due proof. At last (his sin that he lived in found him out), for it happened that two brethren saw him overcome in drink."* This was in 1670,

* *Broadmead Records*, p. 68.

when the church was without a pastor, and the "ruling elders did yet carry on and manage the church power," of dealing with all members who walked irregular in their conversation." When Mr. Hardcastle was minister, "brother Jeremy Courtnay" was under the church's second admonition for "ye sinne of drunkenness, and yette againe guilty." His wife therefore suggested "that the brethren should keep a day of solemn fasting and prayer for him in particular; if it might be the Lord would be intreated to cast out *ye drunken devill* out of him, which did overcome him, and carry him captive at his will." A fast day was accordingly kept at Jeremy Courtnay's house. "After one of ye elders spoke to it, and a brother prayed, our pastor, brother Hardcastle, spake to lay open his sinne, and the evill thereof. He asked ye said brother Courtnay if he were willing to part with his sinne? He answered, he was willing, if he knew his heart. Then, after ye pastor and some other brethren prayed, one of the elders asked him, what demonstration would he give ye brethren and sisters of ye church, that he was heartily desirous and willing to leave his sinne. Then, after pretty much adoe (for he would know of us what we would have him oblige himself to, we told him we would not lay any bond upon him; but if he were reall in his heart against his sinne, he would take revenge upon himself, and clear himself, as 2 Cor. vii. 11. And having read unto him ye case and practise of ye Rechabites, Jeremy xxxv. 2, &c.), at last he concluded, and said, he would refrain and abstain from wine and strong liquors for a year. And then we finished the day with prayer for him."* The end is lamentable. "Jeremy Courtnay, on the seventh day of the eighth month, 1679, was cast out." One of the ruling elders, brother Terrill, by consent of the whole congregation then assembled, pronounced the sentence of excommunication. There is a tone of deepest sadness in it. "In the name of the Lord Jesus," said brother Terrill, "and the authority He

* *Broadmead Records*, p. 178.

hath given to His churches, we do declare that Jeremy Courtnay, for his sin of drunkenness, of which he stands convicted, and several times thereof admonished by the church, but not reforming, from henceforth be no longer a member of this congregation, but be cast out into the world, and no longer to be partaker with us in the holy mysteries of the Lord, nor fellowship with us, nor enjoy the priviledges of God's house: and the Lord have mercy upon his soul."

A very graphic account is given of the method of dealing with another offender, some two years before. "Brother Thomas Jacob had declined in his duty, neglected ye assembling of himself with the congregation, only Lord's dayes, but very seldom on ye week-daye meeting, or at dayes of prayer. And also he had been observed to have drunck too much, soe that he did reel, and was drunck more than twice, kept bad company, and proceeded to bad words in his drink." The first time he was admonished by one of the members that saw or heard of his evil. The second time two or three other brethren were taken to admonish him; "and att his house in a room by themselves, all that tyme, they prayed with him, and he seemed to be sorry for his evill, and to repent of it in words." A third time he fell, "was observed again to be in drink, pretty late att night att an inn." He was now summoned "to be at ye church meeting that day s'ennight, which was also a day of prayer upon an extraordinary occasion. But he came not." Two brethren were sent to him there and then, warning him that if he did not come, he would be cast out. "So he came. And being present, in ye after part of ye day, after five or six brethren had prayed, and some spake short in the interim of prayer, and when none were there but ye members of ye congregation, ye pastor calls for ye said brother to draw near the table." Thomas Jacobs comes up to the table, on which are resting the emblems of the Lord's Passion. The church is appealed to, "whether they did all agree that he should have a church admonition from them?

which they shew by their silence. Thomas Jacobs was then charged "with neglecting due attendance at ye meetings of ye church, and drunkenness. So after ye charge aforesaid laid to him, ye pastor laboured ye evill nature, danger, and consequence of ye sinne unto him, before all ye congregation. Then he pronounced ye sentence in ye names of our Lord Jesus Christ, and this congregation, *to which all the brethren put off their hats, ye sisters not to sitte but stand up.*" The admonishing having been given, and Jacobs having submitted to the rebuke, promising amendment, he was not "cast out."

It is not surprising, when there were cases of this kind frequently occurring, that the church at Broadmead should "not judge it convenient to admit Mrs. Bevis" to its communion, "by reason of her selling strong drink;" nor yet that another church, which had suffered quite as much from the same cause, "should deem it right to withdraw from sister Searly, who "sold strong water, and let persons drink to excess."

Money Matters.

In reference to money matters, and especially where money had been borrowed, the Baptist churches showed a commendable amount of strictness. John Blowes, who was reproved "for his foolish foot-ball play," had, as we intimated, been under "discipline" before on account of his "not paying money due to John Thompson, Simon Parratt, and Roger Stampe;" and he was a second time reproved "for pretending to have given satisfaction" to these brethren for the things they had charged against him, when he had broken faith with them. This reproof extorted a penitential letter from the delinquent. Here is a copy of the letter:—

"*To brother Thompson and his wife, and to brother Parratt, and brother Roger.*

"BRETHREN,—These few lines are to let you understand that God hath been pleased to make me truly sensible of those many evils which have been by me ungodly committed, and by you justly charged against me; which particulars are these: First, neglecting my calling; secondly, neglecting to pay the money due to my landlady in Shadwell; thirdly, neglecting to pay

the money due to you, and also my breach of promise; fourthly, my not making you acquainted with my departure from your house. All which particulars I humbly confess, that God may have the glory, and that the shame may light upon me, to whom it is due. So desiring you would forgive me, and that you would be assistant to me with your prayers to God for me, that I may not be overtaken in the like temptations,

"I rest, your unworthiest brother,

"JOHN BLOWES."

This letter satisfied the congregation, and the writer was again received "into fellowship."

An "admonition" was sent, in the year 1679, by the Broadmead church, to Sarah Watkins, "a widdow woman, for her scandalous, walking disorderly, not tending her business, but making it a common practice to goe up and downe borrowing money of any whomsoever she could, and not endeavouring to pay it again; "taking," in fact, "no care therein, to ye reproach of ye Gospell and wayes of God." This had been a common practice of "Widdow Watkins," and had occasioned her to be reproved "several tymes." She was, by the "admonition" informed, that unless she reformed, the church would be forced to withdraw from her. This was "upon the eighteenth day of the first month." In the same year, "on the seventh day of the eighth month," her case came up again. She had still gone on with her "disorderly and scandalous borrowing, up and downe, of many persons." "Of some she got ten shillings, of some twenty shillings; of some more, some less, as she could get them to lend." She was perpetually "promising people, and not performing, spending much, if not most of her tyme in going up and down; and so did not work, or but little, to endeavour honestly to live, and eat her owne breade." Judgment now overtook her. "Ye church, after her crime was declared, and proved to her face by divers of ye church, and what they had heard she had so served some not of ye congregation," unanimously consented to the sentence of withdrawal. "The ruling elder, brother Tirrell," declared her offence; solemnly told her that she had

"rendered herself among the wicked ones;" reminded her of the several admonitions she had received; and that now necessity was laid upon the church to do its duty." Still "if the Lord should give her repentance of her evil, and she should reform to the satisfaction of the congregation," she would again be received into full communion. Meanwhile, the ruling elder passed this sentence upon her: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the authority He hath given to His church, we do declare that S. Watkins, for her sin of disorderly walking, borrowing and not paying again, making promises and not performing, and not diligently work, is withdrawn from, and no longer has full communion with this church, nor is to be a partaker with them in the holy mysteries of the Lord's Supper, nor priviledges of the Lord's house. And the Lord have mercy on her soul." The ruling elder, thinking the expression "nor priviledges," rather indefinite, adds this explanation: "Nor priviledges, namely, If she doth come to ye meeting, not to be suffered to stay when any business of ye church transacted, &c."

Miscellaneous Charges.

Many "charges" against church members led to their being questioned before the whole body of the church. The *Maze Pond Records* frequently chronicle cases of this kind:—"Not keeping a promise," "not speaking the truth," "borrowing money and making no sign of paying it again," "disorderly walking," "backbiting," "idleness," "breaking the law that disciples should only marry in the Lord," "bringing a public charge against a brother without taking the gospel rule" (Matt. xviii. 15—17). In the General Baptist churches these were regarded as sufficient grounds for excommunication—"Idleness in their calling and not providing necessary uses," "a proud spirit," "lying and slandering their relations," "covetousness," "vain talking," "hypocritical dealing," "being married in the national way" (that is, at the parish church) "with common prayer and all the Romish ceremonies thereof," &c.

It would be wrong to suppose that this strictness of discipline was only maintained by the churches in the Seventeenth Century, as many church books would unquestionably show. Let a single instance suffice. At the centenary of a village church in the Midland counties, held at Whitsuntide, 1870, the pastor gave a brief summary of the church's chequered history, and referred, among other causes of exclusion, to these—"Levity and neglect," that is, of the services, "passion," "obstinacy of temper," "false pretences," "negligence and extravagance," "domestic quarrels," "marrying a carnal man," "running away," that is, deserting their customary place of worship.

"Itching ears" were not patiently tolerated by the earlier Baptist churches. Listening to Quakers, or attendance on what was described as "the false worship of the English Church," was often followed by exclusion. One General Baptist church seriously discussed the question of occasional attendance at the services of the Establishment. After a long and anxious debate, the church unanimously agreed to a resolution which would have delighted the founder of the Quakers himself—"That it is unlawful for any members of the congregation to hear the teachers of the Church of England, *except it be to reprove them!*" It was also formally decreed by the Assembly of the General Baptists in 1698 that it was "irregular" and worthy of reproof when any of their number worshipped with the Pædobaptists. The Minute is as follows:—"It is agreed that the members of churches in our communion *may not join in the worship of God with those that are not.* And we do advise all members of the several churches of our communion to keep themselves pure in the separation; and if any shall transgress therein, we advise the churches unto whom they belong carefully and speedily to admonish them of the evil and danger that do attend it."*

* *MS. Proceedings of the General Assembly*, p. 14.

Dr. Wall's Commendation.

We cannot close this account of the rigorous discipline maintained by the Baptist churches in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, without quoting the opinion on this subject expressed by Dr. Wall, in his *History of Infant Baptism*, published in 1704. The testimony is the more valuable from his well-known dislike of Baptists. "They have," says the Vicar of Shoreham, "this way of adjusting differences that arise among themselves on account of trespasses, dues, or other money matters, which I recite as being worthy of imitation. If any one of them does wrong another, or refuses to do, or to pay, what is equitable in any case; if he will not be brought to reason by a private arguing of the matter, nor by the verdict of two or three neighbours added, the plaintiff brings the case before the congregation, when they, with their elder, are assembled in the nature of a vestry. And in difficult cases there lies an appeal from a particular congregation, to some fuller meeting of their church under a messenger. And he of the two that will not stand to the ultimate determination of the assembly by their usage appointed, is no longer acknowledged by the rest as a brother. As this is very much according to our Saviour's (Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17) and St. Paul's direction (1 Cor. vi. 1, 2, &c.) in such cases, so I have been told that it has the good effect of preventing abundance of law suits and many quarrels; very few of them offering to withstand the general verdict and opinion of all their brethren. And there is no reason to doubt but that a like course would, if it were put in practice,. have a like good effect among other societies of Christians. The like discipline (of renouncing brotherhood) they use against such of their communion as are known to be guilty of any such immorality as is a scandal to the Christian profession of a sober and godly life; *for which care of their members there is no man but will commend them.* And, therefore, I do not mention the ordering of this as particular to

them. All churches, by their constitution, do order the same thing to be done;" but, adds the Doctor, thinking with grief of the Established Church, "the administration or putting into execution of this order is in some churches very slack and negligent; and in some, very much perverted by the corrupt officers of the courts. The bishops visiting every parish in particular (which, when it began to be omitted by some bishops, was so earnestly enjoined by canons), is now almost antiquated and forgotten. And there is many times a very huddled work made of a visitation. So far as this discipline is omitted, or perverted, in any church, so far is that church fallen into a very dangerous decay. Among all the exceptions made by the several sorts of Dissenters against the Church of England, there is none nigh so material as this; nor is there any neglect the amending whereof would, besides the stopping of the mouths of gainsayers, produce a greater spiritual advantage to the people." Dr. Wall thinks, however, that Dissenters ought to consider "that this is much more difficult in a National Church than in one of their societies. For none side with them but what do it out of zeal; whether it be a true and godly zeal, or an ignorant and factious one. Still, it is zeal, and may be made use of to a vigorous execution of the orders past among them. *But there is in all nations, besides the zealous men, a sort of flying squadron* that have really *no concern at all for any religion; but being perfectly indifferent, do, of course, fall in with the National Church, as being the most fashionable at that time. These, wherever they light, are a great hindrance to the due execution af any canons of discipline. They are either by their riches and power too big, or else by their numbers too many, for the force of law.* The Dissenters, notwithstanding the boasts of their exactness of discipline, would find themselves embarrassed if this were their case."*

* *The History of Infant Baptism.* By W. Wall, Vicar of Shoreham, Kent (London: 1707), pp. 453, 454.

CHAPTER XI.

CUSTOMS OF THE EARLY ENGLISH BAPTISTS.

MANY of the early English Baptists followed, with literal exactness, the customs which they discovered from the New Testament to be in use among the primitive Christians. There had been, they contended, no formal apostolic renunciation of these customs. They were therefore still binding upon all future churches. To omit careful obedience to them was to be guilty of neglecting the plain duty of Christians revealed in God's Word. Among these they placed

The Imposition of Hands.

The younger, or Calvinistic body, as we have already seen, adopted this custom in the election of their elders, or ministers; but the General Baptists used the same rite in setting apart all their deacons, and most of their churches regarded it as equally necessary to be observed in the case of every person baptized. Grantham's *Confession* declares, that this last is the "duty of every believer;" that "it is a principle of Christ's doctrine;" and that the object of it is, "that the believers baptized may receive the promise of the Holy Spirit." In proof of this, he quotes, Heb. vi. 1, 2; Acts viii. 12, 15, 17; xix. 6; 2 Tim. i. 6. His *Primitive Christianity* contains an elaborate defence of the same custom. "The papacy," he says, "has greatly corrupted and abused it, by many superstitious adjuncts of human invention." It has also been "in a manner lost among those who

call themselves the Reformed Churches;" but, "in these days God hath begun to revive this neglected truth among the baptized churches of this nation." Grantham, therefore, "lays down, and endeavours to make good, this proposition; that as God hath promised to give to all that are called of the Lord, so He hath appointed a solemn way wherein His servants and handmaidens are to wait upon Him for the reception thereof, which way is,—the prayers of His church, performed by His ministers, or pastors, with the laying on of hands, and that this is a principle of Christ's doctrine belonging to them in the minority of their Christian state." One section of his defence is devoted to showing that "this promise belongs to all Christ's disciples, both male and female." Another meets the objections that may be urged against it: (1) "That if the promise of the Spirit to thus belong to the church, then this will follow: that the doctrines delivered by such gifted men must pass for oracles of truth, being delivered (as will be pretended), by the Spirit of Truth, whose property is, to lead into all truth; and thus every extravagant and impertinent discourse will be entitled to the Holy Spirit; and hence, it is conceived that the decrees of synods, having (as they pretended) the Holy Ghost, are infallible; nay, even private writings will be claimed to be infallible. (2) That this doctrine, that miracles are not ceased, is asserted by the Papists, and they pretend to have had them among them in every age; and hence they urge, that they only are the church, and their decrees infallible," &c.

Grantham further contends that this custom was of "convincing importance," was for the comfort of Christians equally, and of perpetual use in the church." It is "part of that form of doctrine to which the main body of Christian doctrine is reducible," ought to be obeyed from the heart," is "not to be removed out of its place," being joined to baptism, and follows next in place to it. On this account it is "a very great mistake" to regard it as solely "for ordination to offices, or for extraordinary gifts only, or for healing the sick." It is,

moreover, "a mistake the grossness of which is sufficiently detected" by Philip's case, when in Samaria, to suppose that the Apostles used imposition of hands, not by virtue of their ministerial authority, but as gifted persons only." It is "very unadvised and dangerous" to affirm that the Apostles either had the power to bestow the gift of tongues, prophecy, miracle, &c., on whom they laid their hands; or, that *all*, by such imposition, received extraordinary gifts. "It is Christ's peculiar to baptize with the Holy Ghost," and not the Apostles'. Simon Magnus's "dreadful error" was this, that he supposed the Apostles had it. As for the fact that "any stumble at prayer with imposition of hands, because performed by us," it argues no great discretion, but much weakness. "I marvel in my heart," says Grantham, "how men should think it so great a matter for a poor messenger or elder in the present baptized churches to pray for young converts, that they may receive the spirit of promise, . . . and yet think it no high, but a necessary thing for the same men to impose their hands in the ordination of all the officers of the church." As for the demand, "What command have you for laying on of hands?" Grantham thinks it is answered by retorting, "What command have you to impose hands upon elders and deacons?" The Apostles Peter and John practised this custom upon the Samaritans; Paul "put his hands upon Timotheus," and others; and it is therefore not to be conceived that they did, at any of these times, "go preposterously to put their hands upon the disciples, without telling them the meaning of it, and what they might expect at the Lord's hands in that solemn service." And lastly, "it may conduce somewhat to the reputation of this long neglected principle of Christian doctrine, that it is not only found in the Sacred Scriptures, but the ancient Christians did religiously observe it."

The custom does not appear to have been adopted by all the elders and churches of the General Baptists, and more than one treatise was published in opposition to Grantham's opinions. One of these, entitled *A Treatise on Laying on of Hands*, written

by "Mr. D." is thought of sufficient importance by Grantham to deserve a very careful and extended answer. He bitterly complains, in this, that the method of opposition adopted may "expose this principle of the doctrine of Christ to the mockage of the ignorant;" and replies, first, to "Mr. D.'s historical arguments; and secondly, to his own opinion, in opposition to most men in sundry particulars." There is a good deal of acuteness shown by Grantham in his method of meeting Mr. D.'s quotations from the Fathers, and, after showing how entirely they are on his side, he says, speaking of the later corruptions, "Thus the purity of the truth in this, as in other cases, is evidenced by those that have not kept it in the purity thereof." It is "irrational to imagine that every institution of Christ must be expressed in the Scripture with equal plainness; for if they be but *found there*, it is sufficient." For this particular custom "the ground is eminently considerable;" nay even "very sound and concluding." It is an ordinance of Christ, "for five causes: (1) because of prayer, the moral part; (2) because of imposition of hands, the ritual part; (3) because of the promise to which it refers, as the blessing signified by it; (4) because it is placed among the fundamentals of religion, or called a principle of the doctrine of Christ; (5) because it will bear the denomination of an ordinance, as well as the imposition of hands on deacons, or other officers of Christ's church." The opponents of this custom, says Grantham, "deal much after the manner of the Quakers in their opposing baptism, hammering only upon the pratick part;" and he, therefore, contends for the church's right to it, to the end of time, since it is associated with the promise of the Spirit. "The reception of the Holy Spirit is not a thing in our power, but the means to seek for it is in our power." He ends by declaring, that "though this truth is as dear to him as other truths, and therefore he is resolved to defend it with the rest, yet he stands ready to abate whatsoever, upon a fair trial, may appear too harsh, or any way justly offensive."

The churches practising this rite were described as "churches under imposition of hands;" and in their records, the fact of baptism and imposition of hands were duly chronicled together. There are men still living, belonging to some of the older General Baptist churches, who were thus received into fellowship; but, as far as we know, the custom has now fallen into desuetude.

Fasting.

The Baptist of the Seventeenth Century regarded fasting as "a religious duty," "a solemn and Divine ordinance." Not, said he, that there were any set times appointed for its observance. That must be determined "as occasion required." "The drift of the apostles," said he, quoting Socrates Scholasticus, "was not to lay down causes and decrees concerning fasts and holy days; but to become unto us patterns of piety and good life." Moreover, Augustine had affirmed "that upon what days we must fast he found not appointed by any commandment of our Lord or His Apostles." The Lenten fast of the Papist, with its feeble imitation by the English State Church, was regarded as altogether without scriptural warrant. Not so all fasting whatsoever. Fasting was an "extraordinary duty," perhaps, rather than one to be statedly observed; but still, the Master and Lord fasted; the Apostles imitated His example; and they (the Baptists), considered themselves as manifestly in the right when following in their steps.

There were "national" fasts, said one of them; and fasts that were either "congregational," or "particular." Tenaciously as one exponent of Baptist opinions held to congregational principles, he yet contended, "that the king, or chief magistrate, might enjoin a day of general humiliation, when the judgments of God were impending, or were actually inflicted upon a nation." The "good example of the Ninevites" is quoted in illustration of this, "seeing there is no king but hath equal authority with the King of Nineveh in that case."

As for "congregational fasts," they might be fixed upon "by the pastors and leading men in the churches, with the advice of the brotherhood," supposing the churches should "find cause to humble themselves for any judgment which sin had brought on them, or for any blessing they came short of, or danger which attends them." The church at Antioch kept a fast unto the Lord, "without any intervening power of the magistrate; and there is no reason why other churches may not do the like, sith every church is the most capable to judge of the necessity they have to wait upon God in such services." The "particular fasts" were private; must be left to the judgment of individual Christians, and their families, "the special direction of our Saviour about them being duly observed." "Let those in authority look to the first," says an exponent of their opinions at this period, "and call their subjects thereto. Let Christ's ministers look to the second, and stir up the churches to this religious duty. Let every Christian look to the third, especially masters of Christian families; and as occasion requires, devote themselves to this holy exercise."

"Particular fasts" were to be held "on account of our imperfections;" as shown by the examples of David and Paul. Hence, Marlorat defines this kind of fasting as "a measurable castigation or chastising of the body, and a certain discipline, always used of the saints of God to this end, that the substance of heavenly things might be more amiable, and the desires of the body more quenched." But Basil, referring to the spiritual part says, "True fasting standeth in a departure from vices, in the right government of the tongue, in suppressing wrath, in cutting off concupiscence, backbiting, malice, and perjuries." "The true definition of this duty," says the writer, who quotes with approval these passages, "is, a beating down of the body, that we may fly from sin, and with more feeling taste the heavenly doctrine of godliness." Men did fast, in the ancient time, "for deliverance from enemies;" but the chief cause for fasting, "that which gives being to all the rest," was sin; in

others, or in ourselves. "It is, moreover, the way to fit men for mercies, blessings, and favours to be desired."

When "congregational" fasts were decided upon, it was customary to state precisely their object. The Broadmead church among the Calvinistic Baptists, and the Fenstanton church among the General Baptists, set apart particular days for fasting and prayer when their elders, or ministers and deacons were elected; and nothing is more common, in the *Records* of both churches, than entries to that effect. The church of Amersham, to take another example, decided to hold a fast in 1676, and thus announced beforehand the reasons for its being kept: "(1) That the Lord would be pleased to humble us under a sense of our brother Rudrup's miscarriage, and that we may be more watchful for the future. (2) To bewail divisions that are among God's people; and to seek for a spirit of love, unity, illumination, and obedience. (3) To pray that the Lord would be pleased to continue a seasonable harvest. (4) To entreat Him to prevent all wicked designs which the enemies of the truth are devising against those that fear the Lord. (5) To beseech Him to support our sister Child under her heavy trials. (6) To beg that He would sanctify the affliction that is on Mary Hall, and give His blessing on her going to the bath for her recovery."

This selection of some special case as the object of humiliation, fasting, and prayer, was by no means unusual. Five-and-twenty years before the date just given, a General Baptist Church in Cambridgeshire was informed "that Mary Cox was greatly afflicted with heavy temptation; and it was desired, by herself and her parents, that a day should be set apart by fasting to seek the Lord on her behalf: which," says the church record, "was consented unto." A similar instance is chronicled in the Fair Street church-book. "Nov. 1, 1697: whereas, it was requested by sister Wood, whose daughter lies in a deplorable condition, that we keep a day of fasting and prayer to God; we agree, that Friday next be kept, at

her house, from eight in the morning till four in the afternoon."

There is a case mentioned in the *Broadmead Records*, of the whole church fasting and praying on a particular day formerly set apart, on behalf of "the daughter of sister Tylly, one of the members of the congregation." The child was "bewitched, (as termed;) was very much changed, and had strange fitts, and as it were haunted by an evil spirit, and would say that such a woman was in the room. . . . When they conveyed her to Bath, the whole church put apart a day for it, to seek the Lord by fasting and prayer, when bro. Jessey was here, and the child was restored as well as before, and to this day. Ye glory only be given to our God."*

General fasts were often appointed by the Local Associations or General Assemblies. The General Assembly of General Baptists in 1711, appointed the 20th of June as a day of fasting and prayer, "to humble themselves before Almighty God for their sins and great decay in religion; to seek the Lord for grace to be quickened and renewed therein, and also for national calamities;" and in 1714 the same body appointed "a quarterly fast to be kept for one year on the Wednesday after every quarter-day." The Midland Association, in 1726, was only following a common custom when it recommended four days of fasting and prayer "to be kept by the churches between that meeting and the next, in order that it may have power from heaven."

It must not be supposed that these fast days among the early Baptists were not rigidly kept. They sometimes complained that "men did this service by the half part, which they called forty days fasting, or Lent." In that period some do abstain from every living creature; and others, of all living creatures, feed only upon fish. Others, together with fish, feed on the fowls of the air. Others eat neither nuts, apples, neither any other kind of fruit, nor eggs. Some

* *Broadmead Records* (Rev. N. Haycroft), p. 87.

feed only upon dry bread; some others receive not that." Among the last were the Baptists. "Although the kingdom of God standeth not," said the advocate already quoted, "in meat and drink, but in righteousness, &c., yet God is well pleased that His servants deny themselves in that respect. True fasting, if for a day, or for a short space of time, is not from some kinds of food only, *but a total forbearance from all nutriment*, except necessity require an indulgence." The vain pretence of fasting, rebuked by Jerome, is held up as a warning. "What profit," said Jerome, "not to eat of the oil, and to seek certain dainties and difficult kind of meats? as figs, pears, nuts, fruits of palms or dates, the flower of wheat, of honey, and such kind of meats. There is no kind of garden fruit wherewith we do not torment ourselves, to the end we eat not bread. And whilst we do follow pleasures, we are drawn from the King of Heaven. Further, I have heard that some, who against the rule of nature drink no water, and eat no bread, but do eat of delicate suppings and of panned leeks. What a a shame is this! How are we not ashamed of such follies? How are we not wearied of such superstitions? Do we seek in delicates the savour of abstinence?" After quoting this passage, the Baptist advocate of fasting urges his brethren "to avoid the vanities of the Papists and others, and to study the simplicity of the service, and the holy ends thereof." *

Washing the Feet of the Saints.

Smyth mentions this custom, in his *Confession*, as one of the duties belonging to the office of deacon. Many of the General Baptist churches, in the time of the Civil War, began to revive the practice, and taught that it was binding on all Christ's followers, and should be conscientiously practised as a religious ordinance. A warm debate upon its observance arose among

* Grantham's "*Christianismus Primitivus*,—Of Church Discipline," pp. 144—149.

the Lincolnshire churches during the Protectorate; and one minister, Robert Wright, of Helpstone, tried hard to make its acceptance a condition of church fellowship. He withdrew from the church, with those who sympathised with him, and established a small community in which this custom was observed. There were but few General Baptist churches who continued to practise it after the Restoration, and these were chiefly in Kent. The founder of one of these, William Jeffery, pleads for it, in 1659, as "commanded and blessed by Jesus Christ," as "setting forth Christ's humility," "declaring that the ways of Christ are self-denying ways," as "being a self-denying practice, and, therefore, serving to humble the creature;" and, "when performed decently, and in order, tending to produce affection among the brethren."* But these reasons did not long satisfy some of his successors. At the close of the Seventeenth Century, the church of Bessel's Green, over which he had been pastor, adopted this liberal resolution: "As touching washing of feet, it was agreed; that those amongst us that see it a duty should be found in the practice of it; and those who cannot see it to be their duty should not withdraw their affection in the least from those who do; nor those who do from those who do not; but all maintain an equal respect for each other."

In 1682 the *Broadmead Records* tell us "that on Friday, ye seventh April, brother Whinnell, being a member nowhere, because ye church to which he last belonged was dissolved, declared ye work of God upon his soul, and professing to believe in ye principles of ye *Baptist Confession*, 1667, and to be against free will, which was held by ye church to which he had belonged, *and also saying washing feet was not to his judgment*, he was received into fellowship."

There is no account preserved of the time at which the custom of "washing feet" was observed; but from several entries in old church records it is fair to suppose that its use

* Jeffery's *Whole Faith of Man*, p. 102.

was rather occasional than regular, each church determining when the ceremony should be performed.

Anointing the Sick.

This rite was very generally practised and long retained by the General Baptists. They grounded their observance of it on the words of James (v. 14, 15), "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick; and the Lord shall raise him up." It was regarded as the peculiar privilege of God's children in all ages. Various conditions were, however, set down by the General Baptists as absolutely necessary. The sick person should be an approved member of the church. He should himself be convinced of the Divine appointment of the rite. He should express his own ardent desire to enjoy its benefit. The anointers were to be equally persuaded of its propriety and efficacy. It must be the work of two or more ministers, since *elders* were originally enjoined to be its administrators; and it was long regarded as irregular for one minister to act alone. The Biddenden church, in Kent, divided on this point, part holding with the literal meaning of the Apostle's words, and part regarding it as a matter of little moment. It was not until 1701 that the Lincolnshire Association of General Baptist churches determined that, in cases of extreme urgency, the rite was one that a single elder might administer.

There is little doubt of the truth of the following instance of the use of this rite. It is given by the scurrilous Edwards, in his *Gangræna*, from a letter written in 1645, "by," says Edwards, in the postscript, "a person religious, and cordially affected to the Parliament." "One thing more (and it is most of all considerable) of Kiffin's new found light, so called, which I had from some eye and ear witnesses of his members, who were present at Kiffin's and Patient's visitation of one of their mem-

bers, whose name is Palmer, living in Smithfield, and laying hands on her, did also anoint her with oyle; the woman recovering, came into their conventicle house, and there before many people said, that physitians left her as they found her, but brother Kiffin and Patient anointing her, she suddenly recovered, for which in that place she desired thanks might be put up, which Kiffin did also relate, and did, according to the woman's desire (return thanks). Many such heathenish and atheisticale passages, which baseness I could relate of this man, and some of his members, and some others; but it would too much intrench upon your modesty (?) and your patience."*

There is a very remarkable incident mentioned in *The Life and Death of Hanserd Knollys* of that devout and godly man praying for the life "of a very religious widow," at Humberstone, near Leicester, at the time he held the living in that village; but in this case there was "the prayer of faith" without the anointing with oil. The good woman had been left for dead, and had lain speechless for two or three days. Her friends were hourly expecting her death. "I had," says Hanserd Knollys, "brought some of my books to her house, and was studying her funeral sermon; and when I had almost finished the same, the devil set upon me with a violent suggestion, 'That the Scriptures are not the Word of God.' He had suggested this temptation to me divers times before, but prevailed not. Now the tempter assaulted me with this argument: 'Whatever you ask in the name of Christ, God will do it; but that Scripture was not true; and if I would put it now upon trial, I should find it not to be true; for if I would ask the woman's life in the name of Christ, God will not do it; and thereby I should know that the Scriptures are not true; nor are they the Word of God, for His Word is true.' To which I answered, 'Satan, thou art a Lyar, a Deceiver, a false accuser. The Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, and the Scriptures of Truth. And seeing thou hast often tempted me

* Edwards' "*Gangræna*," p. 56. London, 1646.

in this kind, and now dost assault me again, that I may for ever silence thee, thou wicked and lying Devil, I will trust in God, and act faith in the name of Christ in that very word of His truth which thou hast now suggested. I will leave my study, and go and pray for her, and believe that God will hear my prayers through the intercession of Jesus Christ, and restore her life and health, that thou mayest be found a Lyar.' Whereupon I went into the parlour, where she lay speechless, without any visible motion, or use of any senses, and I locked the door; and candles being in the room, I kneeled down by her bedside, and prayed about half an hour, using my voice. And then she began to stir, toss, and struggle so much, that I was constrained to stand up; and holding her in her bed, still prayed over her. Satan then gave me a great interruption, and suggested to me that she was a-dying, and these were the pangs of death upon her. I, notwithstanding this assault of the devil, was assisted by the Holy Spirit to pray and believe still; and in a short time she lay very quietly, and I kneeled down again and prayed fervently; and within half an hour, whilst I was yet praying, she said, 'The Lord hath healed me. I am restored to health.' Then I returned praises to God, and she did joyn with me, lifting up her eyes and hands, still saying, 'I am healed!' Then I rose up from my knees, and asked her how she did?' 'O Sir,' said she, 'God hath heard your prayers, and hath made me whole. Blessed be His holy name!' Then I unlocked the door, and some of her kinswomen and servants being at the door, came in and asked me if she were dead; to whom I answered, No. Then they asked me, How she did? I bad them go to her and ask herself. She had been speechless four days. I told them she could speak now; and as soon as they came to her bedside, she lifted up herself, and said, 'I am well: the Lord hath heard prayer, and healed me. I am very weak, and sore in my bones; but I am in health. I pray you give me something to eat.' And as soon as they brought her some broth, she sat up and eat it, and took some of her julep,

and from that time received strength; and the next day she did rise and walk with a staff; which being heard of, many godly ministers and Christians came to visit her, and to know the truth of what was told them touching her recovery. I told them, it was not anything in me, but that it was the Lord who had done it for His own glory, and to silence Sathan, who was never suffered to tempt me in that kind afterwards. God bruised Sathan under my feet, and my Lord Jesus Christ made a conquest of him, and gave me the victory, and helped me to give Him the glory." *

Mr. Knollys also describes, with equal minuteness, his being anointed with oil by two of his most intimate friends and fellow labourers. We give the story in his own words:—"May, 1670: had a short and powerful distemper in the bowels. No tongue can express my pains. Two learned, well-practised, and judicious doctors of physic, had daily visited me. God did not succeed their honest and faithful endeavours with His blessing. I resolved to take no more physick, but would apply to that ordinance of God appointed by Jesus Christ, the Great Physician of value (James v. 14—19). And I got Mr. Kiffin and Mr. Vavasour Powell, who prayed over me, and anointed me with oyl in the name of the Lord. And the Lord did hear prayer, and heal me. For there were very many godly ministers and gracious saints that prayed day and night for me (with submission to the will of God), that the Lord would spare my life and heal me, and make me more useful and serviceable to the Lord, to the church, and to the saints, whose prayers God had heard, and as an answer to their prayer, I was perfectly healed, but remained weak long after."

Grantham does not mention, like Hanserd Knollys, any special cases of the use of this rite; but in his chapter on

* "*The life and death of that old disciple of Jesus Christ, and Eminent Minister of the Gospel, Mr. Hanserd Knollys, who dyed in the ninety-third year of his age.* Written with his own hand to the year 1672, and continued in general, in an Epistle, by Mr. William Kiffin. London, 1692." Pp. 5-8.

"*Prayer and Laying on of Hands*," he thus writes: "The gift of healing is not wholly taken away, if we dare believe our eyes, or the persons who have been restored to health very suddenly, at the earnest prayer of faithful men, and oftentimes in the use of that ordinance, James v. 14, 15. Would the Lord's people wisely and holily observed this precept, they should doubtless see more than they have yet seen of His power and goodness to His church in the use of this ordinance; for the precept being perpetual, and a gracious promise annexed thereto, there wants only judgment and faith on our part to render it effectual: for He is faithful who hath promised. Howbeit the truth is, that miracles are rarely found; yet from what mine eyes have seen, and from what I have heard by report from some, whom charity will not suffer me to think would affirm an untruth, I may not say, as some, they are not at all to be found. It is enough to me, that God hath nowhere said that He will not work with them; but, on the contrary, hath laid a bar against our forbidding them: 'Forbid not to speak with tongues.' And it is considerable, which Dr. Jeremy Taylor observes out of Irenæus, 'that after the death of all the Apostles miracles did continue even till his time; yea, the greatest instance of miraculous power, *et fraternitare sœpissime propter aliquid necessarium*, &c., when God saw it necessary, and the Church prayed and fasted much, they did miraculous things, even of reducing the spirit to a dead man.'"

It was not an unusual thing for Baptists, in consequence of their observing this rite, to be charged with practising "extreme unction." As late as the beginning of the Eighteenth Century, Mr. Russen thus wrote,* "Let us look unto their end, and bring them to their grave; there, like the Papists at the last hour, they use the extreme unction. Whether, like the the Papists, they esteem it a sacrament, I do not find. I am sure it is both their opinion and practise to some, though pro-

* *Fundamentals without a Foundation; or a True Picture of the Anabaptists.* By D. Russen.

bably all use it not. This is grounded on James v. 14, 15; on which they raise this principle, That anointing the sick with oil by the elders of the church, praying over them with laying on of hands, is a church ordinance for church members that are sick, and for their recovery." Joseph Stennett, in his reply to Russen, confesses that "some still regarded the ordinance as obligatory;" but adds, "When Mr. Russen calls it 'extreme unction,' and says they administer it 'at the last hour like the Papists,' he does them wrong; for this is not done when they despair of life, but for the recovery of the sick, as his own words declare." Mr. Stennett does not himself feel "satisfied that the obligation of the rule continues, since miracles are not common in the Christian Church;" but he is nevertheless of opinion, "unbaptized Philistine," as Mr. Russen esteems him, "that there seems to be more in that text to countenance such a practice than Mr. Russen has produced from the whole Scriptures, in favour of the opinions he professedly defends, in his *Fundamentals without a Foundation; or a true Picture of the Anabaptists.*"

Casting Lots.

It was not uncommon for the General Baptists to elect their deacons by lot, and occasionally their overseers or elders. Two instances of the first are mentioned in the Fenstanton *Records*. A day of fasting, in the first case, was appointed, "on the fifth day of the seventh month." "First, prayer was made to the Most High God; afterwards a word was spoken from the Scripture, touching the necessity of officers in the church, and the qualifications of them, and of their respective duties, together with the manner of their election and ordination. After which the congregation entered into debate, touching the number of officers that should be chosen." They agreed to choose "one elder; four to teach in the congregation, who should not meddle with the office of elder; and two deacons." Christopher Marriatt was elected an elder; and John Blowes,

John Noble, William Woodward, and Thomas Phillips, teachers. They were severally asked whether they believed that the love-feast ought to be celebrated before the breaking of bread, whether they held with imposition of hands upon every person baptized, and whether they objected to members of the congregation joining themselves in marriage with "those that are without;" and having satisfied the brethren, they were set apart to their offices. But there were two deacons only wanted, and four were nominated. Each "gave full satisfaction of all those things that were demanded of them," and it was therefore "generally concluded" that the election of two out of the four should be decided by lot. "Whereupon, lots being made, prayer was made to the Lord that He would dispose of them according to His mind. After which the lots were given forth. And the lot fell upon Joseph Gilman and Robert Earle. Whereupon the elders prayed for them, and laid their hands on them. After which they were publicly declared to be deacons in this congregation. These things being finished, praise was solemnly returned to the Lord; and so, the day being spent, the assembly was (with great joy) dismissed."*

The next account of the use of the lot in the same *Records* was on the same day that one of the men who was thus elected a teacher absented himself, and was the ringleader "at a foolish foot-ball play." There were but few people present on this occasion of the election of one deacon, and again four were nominated. The whole company did not consist of more than eight persons: "Whereupon it was advised, for the better satisfaction, to cast lots, to know which" of the four nominated "were chosen of the Lord. Whereupon, five lots were made, four of which were blanks, and the other not; that so, if it should please God that none should be chosen at this time, that then they might have all blanks. Which being done, prayer was made to the Lord to order and dispose of

* *Fenstanton Records* (Hanserd Knollys' Edition), pp. 189, 190.

them according to His will. After which the lots were given forth; and the first lot which was given forth was the lot which was no blank, which fell upon William Yarle, who was then received as separated by the Lord." Then followed the usual prayer and imposition of hands, when "praise was again rendered to the Lord." As in the other case, the whole day was spent in fasting, and the little assembly of eight persons did not separate from one another until its close.

In 1647 the Warboys Church elected both a deacon and overseer in the same manner. The members of this community were in the habit of meeting frequently with the church at Fenstanton; "but by reason of the great opposition they had" as they journeyed thither, not only from "the rude people" of St. Ives, but also at Fenstanton, they sought the advice of one of the elders of the church at the latter place, and agreed, in accordance with his advice, "to carry on the work of the Gospel, and administer the ordinances" among themselves. Hence this election by lot. "The rest," we are told, "were content therewith," when "the lot fell on William Dunn for an overseer, and John Richards for a deacon."

Bampfield and his friends also resorted to the trial by lot in 1682 when seeking a site for a chapel. Three eligible places were offered, but not agreeing as to which was best, "they laid aside their own prudential determinings; and after they had sought the Lord to choose for them, did refer the determining of it wholly unto Him." The lots were given forth; one for each place, "and," adds Bampfield, "that they might not limit the sovereign will of the Allwise, a fourth blank. Having agreed upon one to draw the lot, they all looked up to the God of heaven, expecting His allotment. The lot, being opened, spoke Pinner's Hall."

It would be wrong to suppose that the Baptists were the only persons who regarded with favour the trial by lot. The Puritan minister of the parish church at St. Ayhow, who was ejected in 1662, and died at Oundle in 1679, left by his will

money to be devoted to the purchase of six Bibles annually, "to be distributed by lot, after prayer offered by the communion-table in the church, that God would direct the lots to His glory."* And still more recently, we have heard of its use by the Independent Church at Dublin in 1826 in reference to the election of their minister. Two gentlemen were before them, the Rev. John Burnett, of Cork, afterwards of Camberwell, and Rev. William Urwick, of Sligo. "A church meeting was called, and it was agreed upon casting lots, after the primitive fashion in the election of an Apostle. Prayer was offered that God would show which of these two He had chosen, and the lot fell upon William Urwick, who was accordingly invited to come."†

We have also heard, within the last few years, of an appeal to the lot in another Independent Church; but in this case it was used in the election of deacons.

Love Feasts.

We have just seen that the elder and four teachers elected by the Fenstanton Church were asked, before being set apart to their respective offices, "whether they believed that the feast of love ought to be observed among the saints before breaking of bread." There is also an entry in the Records of the Warboys Church (date 1655), to the effect "that the order of love feasts was agreed upon, to be before the Lord's Supper, because the ancient churches did practise it, and for unity of other churches near us;" that is, to be in harmony with other communities of the same faith. One Baptist advocate of this custom at that period states the following reasons for its observance: "First, for unity with neighbour churches; secondly, because it is lawful to eat together; thirdly, we see it convenient that they that come from other places should eat

* *Poems.* By R. Wilde, D.D. With an historical and biographical preface and notes, by John Hunt. London, 1871.

† *Life and Letters of William Urwick, D.D.*

with us. But it is our liberty to break bread without it. Fourth reason, because there is some ground in the Scriptures for it, and the Saviour did practice." Edwards also speaks of many sectaries in London observing love feasts, and thus states the principle: "That love feasts, or feasts of love (with which the Lord's Supper is to be administered also), is a perpetual ordinance of Christ, at which only church members are to be present, and to partake."*

Maintenance of the Poor.

The early Baptists of this country were honourably distinguished for their care of the poor. Stress is laid upon the due observance of this duty in their *Confessions*. Smyth advocated having "all things in common, in the necessity of the church, and the poor brethren; nay, that one church ought to assist the other churches in their wants." The *London Confession* does not touch upon the subject; but *Grantham's Confession* declares: "That the poor saints belonging to the Church of Christ are to be sufficiently provided for by the churches, that they neither want food nor raiment, and this by a free and voluntary contribution (and not of necessity, or by the constraint or power of the magistrate); and this through the free voluntary help of the deacons (called overseers of the poor). . . . So there is no need in the Church of Christ of a magisterial compulsion in this case, as there is among others, who being constituted in a fleshly and generational way, are necessitated to make use of a carnal sword, to compel even a small, mean, and short maintenance of their poor; whereas many other members of their churches can and do part with great and large sums of money to maintain their vain fashions, gold, pearls, and costly array, which is expressly contrary to the Word of God." The *Orthodox Creed* is equally emphatic in its enunciation of this duty: "The Christians that have been baptized into one faith, . . . should have fellowship and com-

* *Gangræna*, p. 32. London, 1646.

munion in each others sufferings, or affliction, for if one member suffer all are pained with it. Hence it is also that they partake of each other's gifts in great variety, which make the harmony of dependence on each other, seeing a need of every member, for the public use and common profit of the whole, both in private as well as in more public and solemn worship of God's house; as also an interest in each other's goods and possessions, so far as comports with necessity, according to the charter privileges, or law of their King; and though no equality of property be pleaded for, yet the works of charity and mercy must be minded as a duty, to lend to the Lord, and pity and relieve the Lord's poor, *weekly laying out for them*, as *God hath prospered* us, according to our ability, in freedom, liberality, and charity, according to our brethren's necessity, whether sick or in prison, to visit and relieve them; and *not only within the church, but to all as we have opportunity and ability to be doing good.*" Grantham's opinion of the way in which the so-called deacons of the Established Churches neglected this duty of caring for the poor, has already been quoted.

It would appear, from certain expressions used by the same writer* that there was an additional reason for this care by the Baptists in those days of their poor. He speaks of "the injury that is offered to the poor, to the law, and to all good reason, *in that the widow and fatherless of these that own some truth of the Gospel*, which our nation hath not yet received, *are cast out of their birth-privileges, as if they were not subjects of this realm*, when both the law, and every faithful magistrate stands ready to show them equal favour with others." By whom they were "cast out from their birth-privileges," we are not told; but the writer justly argues that, as they are "bound to pay to the maintenance of the poor of the parish where they live, if they are able," they are fairly entitled to "receive, when not able to support themselves."

* Grantham: *Christianismus Primitivus*, book iii. chap. x. sec. 1. p. 54. London: 1678.

But "the men of the Particular way" were equally outspoken about the church's duty in regard to the poor. They were "to relieve each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities," says the *Assembly's Confession;* "nevertheless their communion one with another as saints doth not take away, or infringe the title or propriety which each man hath in his goods and possessions." They had, long before its publication, defined their opinions of "propriety" (property), and other matters, against the slanders of certain enemies in the days of the Civil War; had shown that, while it was their duty to relieve the necessitous, they held no communistic opinions; and that as "God had built up a wall of separation between the estates of men and men," it would ill become them, as His "professed servants, to endeavour to throw it down."

Even their bitterest opponents were compelled to speak in terms of unstinted praise of their care for the poor. "They are to be particularly commended," says one of them, "for maintaining their poor liberally." Unhappily this writer mars the grace of his declaration by cynically adding, "This is the way that never fails to attract the good will of the multitude, and to make proselytes." *

The deacons, who had special charge of the poor, sought out the needy, and encouraged them to make known their wants. Help was given according to the necessities of the case, or according to the ability of the church. Occasionally the poor in one church were numerous, and the power to help was therefore limited. In this event the more indigent were recommended to wealthier churches, who did not fail to relieve them. The church in White's Alley in 1688 gave one poor sister six shillings weekly, no inconsiderable sum in those days. In the following year there were weekly sums given to different poor members of the same church, amounting in all to six times that sum. This was exclusive of frequent dona-

* Dr. Wall, *History of Infant Baptism*, p. 430. Second Edition. London, 1707.

tions to meet pressing demands, such as rent, doctor's bills, the purchase of fuel, &c. The Maze Pond church-books record the fact "that two sisters desired the church to pay their house-rent, and the church did agree to pay brother Rabbits fifty-two shillings a-year for a room of his for them to live in." "Sister Whittock" was cared for by the Fenstanton church in the same way. John Denne, in pleading for her, said, "Our sister is destitute of harbour; her mother is sickly, her children are small, and the ways are dirty, and she is not able to travel from place to place as she hath been accustomed to. . . . She was at Roystone, but the town would not suffer her to abide there; therefore, on the thirtieth day of the ninth month, my father and brother Gilman brought her in their cart from thence, since which time I have given her harbour. But indeed this place (Caxton Pastures) is not convenient for her, because she cannot go any whither, either for her own relief, or her children's." Poor "Sister Whittock," said Henry Denne, "was at Melbourne, and the townsmen forced her to depart;" and the same treatment had been received at Royston. However, the congregation gave security to the town that she should not be chargeable to them, and three brethren, Edmund Mayle, Thomas Phillips, and Robert Cole, were appointed "to use their utmost endeavours for the providing of a house for her."

Another instance is that of John Wilson, of Great Eversden. A great fire had suddenly burnt down all his barns and out-houses, with his stacks of hay and corn. The estimated total loss was about thirty pounds of the money of the time (about ninety pounds). It was agreed "that the churches be made acquainted with his loss," and, for "the reputation of the Gospel," they would not trouble any other people. An appeal was made to several churches; but it was afterward decided "to help their brethren among themselves," which was accordingly done. One of their appeals, in this case, not meeting with any response, the Roystone

people were prompted to ask "whether Anthony Grey, of Thaxfield, was fit to bear the office of elder," since he was not endued with hospitality," as was shown by his disregard of "our brother Page, a poor man in great want, and now in the case of brother Wilson." The Roystone people felt they had a right to complain, since "they all in that place (Thraxfield) were rich," and they yet held the selfish doctrine "that every church ought to keep their own poor, especially they which are for a supper."*

Two other examples of appeal for help may be given. In both cases the petitions are to churches of which the petitioners were not members. This will explain the smallness of the sum given in one case, and the caution which was shown in the other. William Farmer had been imprisoned for debt by a malicious adversary. On his release he agreed to pay his exacting creditor thirty pounds; but being unable to fulfil his promise, he was threatened with a second imprisonment "to the utter ruin of himself and family." Several brethren of the Dallingham church, Hunts, of which he was a member, attested by signature to the truth of his statements. After due investigation, the church to which he appealed, voted him three pounds. The same church, in what looks like a still harder case, did not show an equal readiness to help. One William Idson, of Witham-on-the-hill, Lincolnshire, had once been a man of good estate; but through various causes was now "brought very low, having neither stock nor goods to live upon." Moreover, "he and his wife, being both ancient and

* "*For a supper.*" Some of the General Baptist churches, in order, as they deemed it, more exactly to follow the primitive model, took supper together before "the breaking of bread." But others, whilst recognising this as "a safe and blameless way" of imitating the example of Christ and the early Christian churches, rather pleaded for it on the ground of its convenience. Many "brethren came from far" to the Communion service; and it was considered "very necessary that the congregation should be refreshed before it be dismissed." So wrote John Denne in 1653. It was this custom which earned for them among their enemies the absurd title of *Legs-of-Mutton-Baptists.*

almost past work, were unable to earn a livelihood without the help of others." Some suspicious circumstances about the application made the church appealed to hesitate before taking action. The letter was "a general one." It had been sent "without a messenger." It was dated some time back; and it did not appear whether the Idsons, "being both ancient" at the time this "general" and doubtful letter was written were now alive. If alive there was still great uncertainty about their present necessities, and as to what amount had been already gathered for their relief. Here were surely reasons enough why the church should not be regarded as uncharitable, because they deemed it advisable, in face of these facts, "to waive the case for the present."

The best things get abused; and the generous care of the early Baptists for their poor and unfortunate members forms no exception to the rule. Unworthy men "made a trade of seeking relief;" became, in fact, professional religious beggars, doing thereby not a little to freeze up the springs of generosity. The churches were at last compelled to protect themselves against impostors; and among rules adopted for this purpose was the following:—"That if our own congregation be not able to relieve those that are in want among us, but are obliged to send for help to other congregations, we will not send any person in want, either with or without a letter, to gather their liberality for himself; but will send a man that is not in want, of whose fidelity we have had experience, that he may receive their liberality and bring it to the congregation."

It may be naturally asked, how were the Baptist churches two centuries ago able to meet the demands made upon them for the regular maintenance of their poor, and for the help of those who were overtaken by misfortune? It is difficult to answer that question. Occasional entries in old church-books only reveal the church's treatment of isolated, and, perhaps, exceptional cases. The church-books containing the names of the pensioners, and the amount of their pensions, have been

lost. We can only, therefore, offer an approximate explanation. That they were familiar with what is now known as the Weekly Offering is attested by the quotation already given from the *Orthodox Creed*. Their notions on the subject of dress, and the known plainness of their general style of living also gave them the opportunity, which many must have embraced, of "laying by in store" for sacred uses what others might foolishly squander. Moreover, it was a standing rule in most of their churches, that all absent members should send their weekly contribution to the church's treasury; and the General Baptists, therefore, appear to have anticipated John Wesley in their belief in the power of pence regularly contributed. But, unquestionably, one of the chief sources of their strength in this matter lay in their intense spirit of religious clannishness, which both prompted and fed their surprising and persistent liberality. They were not the people to waste half the money collected for the poor in distributing their benefits, as some tell us is the effect in many places of the present Poor-law of England; but every penny contributed to the poor reached the poor at once.

There are not many indications, in the middle of the Seventeenth Century, that the Baptists had any great need to spur the flagging generosity of their church members. It is toward the close of that century that we first meet with symptoms of the decline of their fervour and benevolence. The General Assembly of General Baptists, if more money were needed for defraying the economical expenses of their messengers, or apostles, simply wrote to the churches to say that "they must make their collections *larger*;" and the collections were made larger accordingly. But by-and-bye, we begin to find minutes about "the increase of covetousness," with severely worded rebukes thereon; and at last, one of their public Associations is compelled to say, in declining an application to them for help, —"*that money is so hard to come by.*"*

* *MS. Minutes of the General Association.*

It must not be overlooked, however, that in addition to the weekly and monthly contributions for the poor, wealthy members of Baptist churches left legacies to be devoted to the same object. As to the general effect of these legacies on the liberality of the churches themselves, there is but one opinion.

Marriage Service.

The Puritans anticipated the Baptists in their dislike of the marriage service enjoined in the Book of Common Prayer. At the Hampton Court Conference in 1604, they objected to the use of the ring, and to the familiar words, "With my body I thee worship." After a brief discussion, the Conference ruled that the objections were frivolous. They did not seem frivolous to the early Baptists. "Why," they asked, "should they follow the Pagan custom of giving a ring as a pledge of affection?" They might, perhaps, have never asked the question, or have thought otherwise, if the explanation quoted with approval by a modern Cambridge professor had only been known to them. "The matter of the ring is gold," says this authority, "to imply how noble and durable our affection is. The form is round; being the properest figure to unite things separated, and to imply our respect shall never end. And the place is the fourth finger, *where is a vein which comes directly from the heart*, and where it may always be in view; and being a finger least used, it may be least subject to be worn."*

It was not only the compulsory use of the ring that was offensive to the early Baptist, but the ceremonies associated with it. "The man shall give unto the woman a ring," says the Marriage Service in the Prayer Book, "laying the same upon the book, with the accustomed duty to the priest and clerk; and the priest, taking the ring, shall deliver it to the man," &c. "Why this ceremony?" asked the Baptists; "is the ring unfit for use until it has been placed upon the Prayer Book, and passes through the hands of the priest? This is to

* Bates's *College Lectures on Christian Antiquities*. London. 1844.

make the priest the vehicle of some special grace; and what is this but flat Popery?" Moreover, the use of the formula, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," was objectionable to him; it savoured somewhat of the old Popish notion that marriage was a sacrament, and it was unwarrantable to use such a form of words in an order of service which had not received the Divine sanction. His dislike of the words, "With my body I thee worship," was quite as emphatic and vehement. "The husband was the head of the wife," said he; "but this is reversing the order, even if you only mean by '*worship*,' reverence and service. This is to unman a man to gratify a ceremony." But the Baptist had not learnt, like some Anglican divines, that "words have a non-natural sense." He took them to mean just what they said; and to him, therefore, these words—"with my body I thee worship"—were simply revolting. "Did they not make him promise to worship the creature? And that in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost? And what was this, but idolatry capped with blasphemy?"

He even went a step further than the Puritan in his view of the Marriage Service:—"It should certainly be a public service, and according to the law of God and the law of the land; *but what need was there for a minister even?* The minister did not marry the parties, and could not; that was the proper act of the parties themselves:" at least, so argued the brave old Grantham, in his book entitled *Truth and Peace*.

The result was inevitable. The Baptists refused to submit to the ceremonies enjoined in the Book of Common Prayer, and unless they conformed to these ceremonies the Established clergy refused to marry them.* The Baptists, therefore,

* At the General Assembly of the General Baptists, in 1697, the question was discussed, "Whether a member of our communion may be married by a National minister?" and it decided, "that, provided the minister omitted the ceremonial part thereof respecting divine worship," he might.—*MS. Proceedings of the General Assembly*, vol. i., p. 12.

adopted a form of their own; the origin of that which is still used by the Society of Friends.

The method of proceeding was thus:—When two persons, free from all other engagements, and qualified according to God's law and the country's, agreed to be married, due notice was given beforehand to the Church of which they were members, that "all suitable inquiries might be made, and that no scandal be created." Sometimes the notice was repeated in two or three separate meetings of the congregation. No valid objection being discovered, the sober and demure bridal party came to the plain brick meeting-house. After a suitable pause, the bride and bridegroom stood up before the congregation, took each other by the hand, and declared, either in the words of the Prayer-book, "as acknowledging them to be very fit for that purpose;" or in words to this effect: "Brethren and sisters—In the fear of the Lord, and in the presence of this Assembly, whom I desire to be my witnesses, I, A. B., do take this our dear sister, C. D., to be my lawful wife, promising, through Divine assistance, to be unto her a faithful and loving husband, until it shall please the Lord by death to separate us." The bride afterwards made a similar declaration in regard to A. B. as her "dear brother," and "lawful husband." A certificate of marriage, "drawn upon a properly stamped paper, was then signed by them, and attested by as many of the congregation as was thought convenient." This ran as follows:—

"This is to certify to all men that we, A. B., of ——, and C. D., of ——, have, the date hereof, entered into the covenant state of matrimony, according to a solemn contract heretofore made between ourselves, and with the consent of such as are concerned therewith. And we do now, in the presence of Almighty God, and the witnesses hereafter named, ratify the said contract and covenant-act of marriage this day verbally made; in both which we do, in the fear of God, mutually and solemnly, and for our part respectively promise, in the strength

of God, to live together in the state of marriage, according to God's ordinance, from this day forward, to love each other as husband and wife, and faithfully to perform all the duties to which we are bound by God's law, and the good laws of the land, in that case provided, till the Lord by death shall separate us. In testimony whereof, we have hereunto set our hands, the —— day of ——.

"A. B.
"C. D.

"We, whose names are subscribed, do testify that the above-said, A. B. and C. D., the day of the year above-said, did mutually take each other into the state of marriage, according to the contract and covenant, and ratifying the same by word and by the subscription hereof, as above said.

"E. F.
"G. H.
"I. J."

After the signing of this certificate the minister, or any gifted members of the church, offered suitable counsels to the newly-wedded pair, and closed the ceremony by solemnly imploring the Divine blessing upon the union. A record of the marriage was then carefully entered in the church-book. Some of these entries are very brief, and not a little curious. Here, for example, is one from the church-books of Bromsgrove: "At a church meeting, upon the fourteenth day of the tenth month, 1692, the civil contract of marriage was, between John Hayns and Susannah Ducks, solemnised and performed, before the Lord God, angels, and us who were witnesses at the same time, and several members, male and female. John Eckells, sen.," &c. &c.

In order to understand the lawfulness of such marriages, it must be remembered that by the Barebones Parliament in 1653, marriage was made a civil contract; that this act was ratified in the reign of Charles the Second; and that it re-

mained in force for a century. The scandal created by the Fleet marriages in the reign of George the First, performed by a profligate clergyman and his curate, led to the passing of the Marriage Act in 1753. Jews and Quakers were alone exempted from its provisions, all other Dissenters being compelled to be married at the parish church. The Bill of Lord Russell in 1836 relieved Nonconformists from this manifest injustice.

Many attempts were made by the bitter enemies of the Baptists to put a stigma upon their simple marriage rites, before the passing of the Act of George the First; but more than one action in a court of law brought them to a wholesome, if tardy, repentance. One instance will illustrate many. John Aldridge, a substantial yeoman, living at Barton-in-the-Beans, Leicestershire, married, in 1750, Elizabeth Cooper. A gentleman of the neighbourhood, who had long distinguished himself by his petty persecution of Aldridge and his friends, employing a churchwarden as his agent, indicted John Aldridge in the Spiritual Court for living in adultery with Elizabeth Cooper. The base and heartless attempt to destroy the domestic peace and tarnish the spotless name of a worthy and virtuous family, excited the indignation of all good men. A legal gentleman in a neighbouring village volunteered his services to Mr. Aldridge, and greatly helped him by his advice and countenance. The case came to a trial; and after a full investigation, the Court declared that the marriage of Mr. Aldridge was perfectly legal. Fearing a prosecution for defamation of character, the churchwarden sued humbly for pardon, which Aldridge cheerfully granted. But this victory, and the humiliation of his willing tool in the case, still further incensed the man who originated the suit, and a mean and cowardly attack was made by him upon the inoffensive yeoman. As Mr. Aldridge and his family were returning one evening in the dark from the house of a friend, this shameless defamer, at the head of a tipsy rabble, waylaid them and offered them the grossest insults. The

ringleader was summoned to the Leicester Assizes in 1751; and, having secured a packed jury, confidently expected an easy escape; but the character of the witnesses, and the equity of the judge defeated their designs.

Eighteen years after this incident, a clergyman in the County of Durham gave a sample of the intolerance with which Baptists were then not infrequently treated. He refused to marry a couple because, having been born of Baptist parents, they had neither of them been christened in their infancy. The young people, finding the clergyman obstinate, and thinking they had no redress, crossed the Tweed, and were married in Scotland. But the "priest" was avaricious as well as bigoted. On their return he demanded his fees for the marriage which he had refused to perform. The Baptists declined to pay any attention to such an unreasonable demand; and the clergyman thereupon threatened them with a citation to a Spiritual Court. The Dissenting Deputies in London were written to; the young people were encouraged by them in their resistance; and the grasping "priest" was at last glad enough to drop all further proceedings.

Burying the Dead.

Thomas Grantham's book, *Christianismus Primitivus* is now very scarce, and not likely to be reprinted. It may, therefore, not be without interest to quote what he says on the subject of burying the dead.

"The burial of the dead," says Grantham, "is a moral duty, as it is an evidence of humanity; and yet hath no form prescribed in the Word of God for the solemnity to be used on such occasions. That therefore which may most improve the death of our friends to our own preparation for death, and give demonstration of our love to the deceased, with our hope of his resurrection, is most useful at such opportunities; be it a word of exhortation, with solemn prayer, for the better preparation of ourselves for the day of our dissolution. Usually of old,

burials were solemnised with lamentations; Gen. xxv. 2. Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her; yea, with great lamentation, as when Stephen was buried, Acts viii. 2; and sometimes with fasting, 1 Sam. xxxi. 13.

"But for the place of burial, we find it was at men's liberty also, some preparing their own sepulchres in their gardens. Nor matters it much, so the dead be buried, in what part of the earth we make restitution of that earth which we have carried about for a small moment. Yet this I must say, that births and burials are material passages concerning human affairs, and therefore publick notice would be taken of such changes. And here the Baptized Churches should not be rejected, but some care taken for the keeping in memory the births and burials which happen to be among them, for the avoiding of such controversies as are wont to arise about matters of estate, &c.

"Nor is it rational to debar them the benefit of the common burying-places, sith they do pay all impositions for the fencing and orderly keeping of the said places, as they have frequently been in these late times;* yea, so inhuman hath been the usage of some, that *they have been taken out of their graves, drawn upon a sledge to their own gates, and their left unburied.* Thus did certain of the inhabitants of Croft, in the county of Lincoln, deal with one, Mr. Robert Shalder, a baptized believer, Anno 1666, to the eternal infamy of the doers of that cruel Act, whilst his epitaph lives to keep in memory that sordid action, viz.:—

"'Sleep, pious Shalder, sleep, in this sequestered grave;
Christ's faith thou well didst keep; maugre the fiercest wave
Which Satan's storms could raise against the faith: And now
In vain he findeth ways his malice still to show.
Thy Saviour had no grave, but what a friend did lend;
Enough if the servant have like favour at his end;
And now thy faith divine I'll pin upon thy hearse,
Which bright, though brief, doth shine.'

(Hebrews vi., first, second verse.)

* The *Christianismus Primitivus* was printed in 1678.

"For any to make it unwarrantable for the baptized churches to bury their dead among their neighbours, though of different opinion in point of religion, is a gross vanity; and it were as idle as to say, we may not dwell in one house or city together; nay, much more absurd, for the dead know nothing, cannot injure one another, but the living may. This was Tillam's conceit, that prodigious apostate, who, instead of promoting truth in an amicable way, made it odious to the eyes of all men, by the foolish niceties wherewith he incumbered it, together with his Jewish ceremonies."

Crosby records, concerning "the chief actors" in the disinterment of Mr. Shalder, "that they did not long survive it; for one of them died suddenly, and the other languished for some time, being greatly terrified with the remembrance of what he had done for the dead."

CHAPTER XII.

ABOUT SINGING.

THE Baptists of the Seventeenth Century were not entirely a songless people. Some few congregations were accustomed to sing the Psalms in the Authorized Version; but others, while not objecting altogether to singing as a part of Divine worship, manifested a strong dislike to metrical versions, and promiscuous, or congregational singing. The ground of their dislike was not the "barbarity and botching that everywhere occurs in the translation of Sternhold and Hopkins" *—the only English metrical version then in existence. They would have had an equal objection to the most accurate and finished translation, if it had been in metre. All such versions were quaintly styled by them "human composures," and as such were therefore

* "In the reign of Edward VI. the effects of the Reformation became visible in our poetry, by blending religious with poetical enthusiasm, or rather by substituting the one for the other. Then flourished Sternhold and Hopkins, who, with the best intentions and the worst taste, degraded the spirit of Hebrew psalmody by flat and homely phraseology; and mistaking vulgarity for simplicity, turned into bathos what they found sublime. Such was the love of versifying Holy Writ at that period, that the Acts of the Apostles were rhymed and set to music by Christopher Tye."—Campbell's *Essay on English Poetry*. The title of Tye's book is as quaint as his rhymes are grotesque:—"*The Actes of the Apostles:* translated into Englyshe metre, and dedicated to the Kynge's moste excellent majesty. By Christopher Tye, doctor in music; with notes to each chapter, to syng and play upon the lute; *very necessary for students after they studye to fyle they witts*, and also for all Christians that cannot synge, to read the goodlie storeys of the lives of Christ Hys Apostles. London, 1553."

deemed unsuitable for use in public worship. The strictness of their opinions on the subject of church-membership, and their disrelish for anything that seemed to ignore the difference between "the church" and "the world," occasioned their reluctance to adopt congregational singing.

A curious illustration of this occurs in one of the earliest references to Baptist opinion on the subject, found in the *Broadmead Records*. The circumstances were these: the two Baptists, the Independent, and the Presbyterian churches in Bristol were "under persecution" in the year 1675, and an attempt was made, apparently with a view of strengthening each other's hands, to secure a united service. A preliminary meeting was held, attended by eighteen representatives from the four congregations. The Presbyterians—"Mr. Week's people"—conscious of certain differences between their own customs and the customs of the three congregational churches, were afraid that this "joyning together soe near might widen and hurt" the sort of fellowship they had hitherto enjoyed, and damage their good opinion of one another. According to their view "the stick and obstruction" consisted in these four matters: (1) their habit of praying for magistrates, whether good or bad; (2) their custom of "*singing Psalms with others besides the church;*" (3) their opinion that none ought to preach but those who had been ordained by the Presbytery; and (4) their fear, lest the Baptists "should persuade some whom they deemed the best among them to be baptized." The first and two last points were met in a frank and brotherly fashion. As to praying for magistrates, "they were all for it as a duty;" and although some of the expressions and titles used by the Presbyterians when praying for magistrates, they could scarcely adopt; yet, "they would bear with one another, if they could not say Amen in all things." As to the question about preaching, "they were all for an orderly ministry," and would hear each other's pastors when they came out of prison; but would be

contented, meanwhile, to listen to such "gifted brethren, not ministerially called," as were still left among them. It was, moreover, agreed "that in this meeting of union none should preach up baptism of believers, nor any other should preach against it." So far all were agreed. But when they came to the question of singing, certain differences were discovered, which afford a singular revelation of the customs of the times. The representatives of Broadmead, of the Independents, and also part of those belonging to the second Baptist community, "Mr. Gifford's people," were willing "to sing Psalms with others besides the Church;" but some few of this second Baptist society "scrupled to sing in metre as they were translated, although all of them did hold that singing of Psalms." The dissentients pleaded for permission to show their dislike of metrical versions and promiscuous singing "*by keeping on their hats*" during this part of the service, "or going forth;" but the rest were naturally unwilling that this public and disorderly method of showing displeasure should be adopted. It was, therefore, agreed, that if the united services should be held, those who sympathised with the dissentients, "*if they would not keep off their hatts and sitt still*, should be desired to stay away."

That the Broadmead church were accustomed to sing Psalms at most of their services is evident from the numerous references to this part of worship in their remarkable and invaluable *Records*. In fact, one of the earliest complaints made against them in 1671 by "old Mr. Wright, that had been sheriff," was this—"that he could hear them sing Psalms from their meeting-place at his house in Hallier's Lane." But the circumstance of the Presbyterians raising this question about congregational singing four years later, indicates that there was at that time a divided opinion among the Baptists on the subject; a supposition which was at once confirmed by the conduct of some of "Mr. Gifford's people." We have, however, no means of ascertaining how far these two Bristol

churches represented the then prevalent opinion on singing in their section of the Baptist denomination.

Outwitting Persecutors by Singing Psalms.

There is a smack of dry humour in the use to which the Broadmead church put their fondness for psalmody. They often sung Psalms in order to outwit their persecutors. Before their meetings began some particular Psalm was selected, in the event of what they called "trouble"—that is, the sudden appearance of informers, or of the mayor and his officers, for the purpose of dispersing their assemblies or apprehending their preachers. In "Brother Gifford's meeting" there was a trapdoor in the floor, on which the preacher stood, and "a company of tall brethren" surrounded the speaker, so that he could be instantly let down into the room below on the signal being given that an informer was at the door. But the Broadmead brethren, in similar emergencies, immediately struck up the Psalm they had previously agreed upon, and sung it in a slow and deliberate manner. They had also hit upon an ingenious contrivance for shielding the speaker from the eyes of any informers who might creep unawares into their assembly. The speaker stood behind a curtain, with a few well-known friends, and this enclosure was guarded from intrusion by a line of brethren "without the curtain," who hindered any from going behind but persons of well-established repute among them. If the informers' party in the street made a rush up-stairs, they found their steps impeded by "the women and maides" purposely sitting on the stairs to hinder their too rapid progress. And when they entered the room the curtain was lifted up, and "all ye people began to sing a Psalme."

In this way the mayor and his officers were many times prevented from pouncing upon any one of the company as the ringleader: "when all were singing, he knew not who to take away more than another." Of course the mayor was not

pleased thus to be baffled in seizing his prey; but "brother Terrill tould him Singing of Psalms was not contrary to ye Liturgies of ye Church of England"— for which ready speech brother Terrill was declared a ringleader, and threatened with imprisonment. On other occasions, when the mayor, or the bishop's men came to disperse them, and commanded them, in the King's name, to depart, "ye people singing, none heeded what they said, but sate still." They thus tried to drown, to the ears of the rest of the congregation, the coarse and brutal language which some of the officers did not scruple to use to "grave gentlewomen," and even "to sister Ellis, an elder." When they called the first "confident jades," and the second "old carrion," "ye people kept singing all ye while." On another occasion they thus defeated the whole *posse* of their persecutors—"the mayor and his officers, and the bishop, with divers of his crew and men." Mr. Hardcastle, their minister, had just been released from his second imprisonment. It was the first Lord's-day after, "being ye 22nd of ye 6th month, August, 1765." A larger company than usual had met together for religious worship. The mayor, hearing of the meeting, arranged his plans accordingly. On reaching the door, two sergeants were sent up to command them to disperse, one of them making the proclamation, "*O, yes!*" three times in a loud voice. The whole assembly struck up the Psalm selected, on receiving this signal that their persecutors were below, so that the sergeant's voice was unheard save by the few that stood near him. The mayor now goes up himself, followed by his attendants, and repeats the command, in the King's name, to depart. Still the singing went on,—"every one looked into his owne book, and soe sung, and kept stopps one with another, and lifted up their voice together." The mayor was puzzled, and "knew not what to do." He did, in fact, the best thing he could do, under such circumstances: "he went downe again." All this while the bishop himself was skulking "below att the door." He

also "was coming up," but his courage failed him when he found that "the first paire of staires was somewhat dark." Braggart as he was, he did not know but the second pair might be darker, and he therefore very prudently "drew back." The whole company of persecutors being thus foiled at Broadmead, next tried "brother Gifford's meeting," where, "finding him in exercise [that is, preaching,] he was marched off to prison."

Grantham on "the Duty of Thanksgiving."

Three years after the dissension at Bristol on the subject of singing, Grantham published his elaborate treatise on *Primitive Christianity*. It is extremely improbable that he knew, even by rumour, what had taken place at this private meeting of the representatives of the four congregations. It is, however, a fact worth repeating, that Grantham was regarded as the eloquent mouthpiece of the General Baptists of his own day. On both accounts, therefore, the independence of his testimony on the Baptist opinion about singing, and the position he held among his own people,—his remarks in the chapter in *Primitive Christianity* on "the duty of thanksgiving," possess a value all their own.

Grantham begins by complaining that all parts of the Christian religion "have suffered great violence by the encroachment of human innovations," and "this solemn part of God's holy service hath suffered with the rest. So perverted are men's views of the subject of thanksgiving, that it has become hard to bring them off from the mistakes into which they have fallen." However, he will "do somewhat, as God shall assist him," to shew these four things:—"(1) That Psalms and Hymns, as recommended to us, or required to be performed as a part of public worship of God in the Christian Church, are to be sung there, *by such as God hath fitted thereto by the help of His Spirit, for the edification of the Church;* (2) That the *matter* of these Psalms is to accord with the Psalms and

Hymns in the Scripture; and that the Primitive Church used no other *manner* of singing than such as that the Church may be edified by understanding the voyce of him that sung; (3) That the formalities now used generally in singing Psalms, &c., differ greatly from that which God hath ordained for this worship and service in that case; (4) Make manifest the sincerity of this service in praising God in Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs in the Christian Church."

In touching upon the first point, Grantham contends that there are two ways of performing the service. The first is, "by meer art, as those doe who only speak what another puts into their mouths," which, at its best is "no Christian ordinance," but "counterfeit Psalmody," and "an empty form of words." The second is, "by the gift of God's grace and Spirit." He then proceeds to show that this was what the Apostle meant when he said, "How is it, brethren, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine," &c.* Each one had not a Psalm for edification, and therefore each one could not actually sing Psalms. Those who were thus gifted spoke for the profit and comfort of others, although even they might be refused, "if not according to the Word of God." The Psalms of David could not be meant, since all had them, and even a child seven years old, could read or sing these Psalms; therefore, "having a Psalm," indicated "something more than the ability to read or sing them out of a book." Still further, "he who had the Psalm is required to sing the Psalm in the church, *and none else;* just as he that hath a doctrine was required to produce it, and not he that had it not." And, lastly, the singing was to be "performed to edifying; consequently the church is to attend him, or to what he holds forth in the way of psalmody, that they may be taught and admonished by him, or have their hearts exhilarated or drawn up to praise the Lord in conjunction of their spirits with his." This last point is also taught in the words, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and

* 1 Corinthians xiv. 26.

spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart unto the Lord."* Not that there was any great difference "as to the matter and manner" between psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; they were various expressions for the same thing substantially, like prophesying, preaching, and teaching; nor yet that these words imply "that every man and woman must needs speak together, that the psalms, &c., were sung promiscuously of the whole congregation, any more that the Apostle Jude's words, 'Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,' &c., imply 'that every man and woman is to preach and pray actually at the same moment in the church." Moreover, the words, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs," † &c., indicate that this service is, after all, "a more difficult way of teaching than that of the common gift of exhortation;" and it has only to be mentioned to show "the unmeetness of the weakest youth or virgin in the church admonishing and teaching the pastor, as much as the pastor teacheth and admonisheth them" in the due performance of this duty. "This is to make all the body a mouth, and wholly to take away the use of the ear, whilst Psalms are thus being sung." Much more could be urged "for all praying at once than for all singing at once. Prayer is the pouring out of our hearts to God, and not to one another; but in Psalms we speak to one another, and therefore, of necessity, some must hear."

Grantham next touches on the practice of "the Primitive Church in singing of Psalms;" and contends that "no other way" was in use except that already explained. The "singing at the Last Supper" is no proof to the contrary. To say nothing about the doubt as to the meaning of the word; whether, that is, the hymn was *said* or *sung*, there is no statement as to who said this hymn, or sung it, and there is no evidence what the hymn was. "In fact," says Grantham, "there is nothing

* Ephesians v. 19. † Colossians iii. 16.

to justify such a confused singing as many use in these days, either in the account of the Last Supper in the Gospel, or in the description of this sacred ordinance given by Paul. The Apostle does speak (1 Cor. x.) of 'the cup of blessing which we bless;' but he gives us no account of the hymn or psalm used by our Saviour at that holy Manducation. Moreover, in the prison at Philippi, Paul and Silas did not pray together, neither did they sing together, but they both prayed and sang "by course." So, in writing about "saying, Amen, at the giving of thanks," the Apostle does not favour "promiscuous singing by many voices together, as in parochial assemblies, or other congregations of Christians;" but "quite overthrows it, since he makes it necessary that the voice that giveth thanks, or singeth, be intelligible to him that stands by, as much as it ought to be in prayer, that so the rest may be edified, and give their Amen to what is expressed in prayer or praises." In the "noise" of promiscuous singing, "musick may please the ear," but none can be edified. "Indeed," says Grantham, "this new device of singing what is put in men's mouths by a reader;" this singing, either "David's Psalms, or their own composures, in a mixed multitude of voices;" this singing, not merely "in parochial assemblies, but by those that think themselves more happy, in that they have found out a way to compose hymns themselves, and set them out, that others may sing the same things with them," is not only "wholly without any example from any of the Primitive Churches of Christ," but is "foreign to the sincerity and simplicity of this holy service." Once introduce the habit of "tying all to one man's words, measures, and tones, in so great an ordinance" as this, and you will "make a fair way for forms of prayer" to follow.

Grantham finds no little satisfaction in the fact, "that many good men of antient and latter times have greatly disliked the musical way of singing Psalms;" and in the third section he quotes a few instances in point. There is Augustine,

for example. "Very fierce am I sometimes," says Augustine, "in the desire of having the melody of all pleasant music, (to which David's Psalter is often sang), banished from mine own ears, and out of the whole church too; yea, the safer way, as it seemed to me, which I remember to have often told me, of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, who caused the reader of the Psalm to sound it forth with little warbling of the voice, as that it was near to pronouncing than to singing." Rabanus Maurice also declares that in the Primitive Church "singing was more like loud reading than a song." Athanasius, moreover, so disliked "a confused way of psalmody that he utterly forbad it, since it raised both lightness and vanity in singers and hearers." Erasmus, in his comment on 1 Cor. x. points out how "in monasteries, cathedrals, and temples, almost generally" men dissent from Paul, for in "Paul's time there was no singing, but saying only." Theodosius Basil, also, in his *Book of Relics*, tells us of some strange innovations made by Pope Vatalian:—"Being a lusty singer, and a fresh courageous musician himself, brought into the Church prick-song, descant, and all kinds of sweet and pleasant melody. And because nothing should want to delight the vain, foolish, and idle ears of fond and phantastical men, he joyned the organs to the curious musical. Thus was Paul's preaching, and Peter's praying, turned into vain singing and childish playing, unto the great loss of time, and to the utter undoing of Christian men's souls, which live not by singing and piping, but by every word that cometh out of the mouth of God." Church music was indeed introduced two centuries before, "though not with these curiosities." And the "vanity thereof hath ever been censured by wise men, and particularly by Dr. Cornelius Agrippa. 'Music,' saith he, 'is grown to such and so great licentiousness, that even in the ministration of the Holy Sacrament, all kinds of light, wanton, and trifling songs, with piping of organs, hath place. As for Common Prayer, it is so chanted and minced, and mangled by our

costly hired musicians, *that it may justly seem not to be a noise made by men*, but rather *a bleating of brute beasts; whiles the children neigh out a descant, as it were a sort of colts, others bark a counter tenor like a number of dogs. Some bellow out a tenor, like a company of oxen; and others grunt out a bass, like a company of hogs*, so that a very ill-favoured sound is made: but as for the words and sentences, nothing is understood but the authority and power of judgment from the ears and heart.'"

This quotation seems to Grantham "to give fit occasion to show something of the vanities formerly in use in cathedral devotions, and now in common use in several places in this nation." He, therefore, quotes one of the collects as generally sung, "and the manner thus":—

"*Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, of all wisdom; which knoweth our necessities before we ask, which knoweth our necessities before we ask, before, before we ask, before we ask; and our ignorance in asking, in asking, in asking. We beseech Thee, we beseech Thee, we beseech Thee, to have compassion, to have compassion, to have compassion, on our infirmities, on our infirmities, infirmities, our infirmities. And those things, those things, those things, which for our unworthiness, which for our unworthiness, unworthiness, our unworthiness, which for unworthiness, we dare not, we dare not, we dare not; and for our blindness, our blindness, for our blindness, we cannot ask, we cannot ask, we cannot ask: Vouchsafe to give us, vouchsafe to give us, for the worthiness, for the worthiness; of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, Jesus Christ our Lord, of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen.*"

However much Grantham may have disliked these "vain repetitions," or however greatly he may have admired the sharp things said about Church music by "some ancient and latter writers," it is somewhat strange that one so well-informed did not notice the fact that congregational singing was

destroyed by these innovations, not created; that the clerical *Cantores* took the singing entirely out of the mouth of the people generally; that later on, one of the signs of men being disciples of Huss and Luther was, that they sung Psalms together; and that many suppose this practice earned for the Lollards their distinctive name.

In the fourth section Grantham discourses on what he deems "the sure way of praising God in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, according to the Scripture." He dismisses the example of singing, accompanied by musical instruments, set forth in the Old Testament, as a concession to the "gross hearts of the Jews," as belonging to what Calvin calls "the law of schooling, and now no more meet for setting forth God's glory, than if a man should call again censing, lamps, and other shadows of the law. Foolishly, therefore, have the Papists borrowed these things from the Jews." Since, then, "singing in tunes and measures by a company of singing men, or a confused multitude, will be found to be as much borrowed from the Jews, as the musical instruments themselves, . . . and the law of these ceremonies being peculiar to the Jewish Church, and in no ways transmitted to the Church of Christ by any part of Christ's doctrine in the New Testament, . . . it remains that we stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free."

As to the *matter* of singing, in New Testament Churches, "it must be the Word of God, or that which is according to it, seated in the *soul* of the Christian, and not as it may be read to them out of a book only, and then repeated." "David's Psalms and other Divine hymns, contained in the Scriptures, are good presidents and guides to us in the performance of this duty; but to take these Psalms barely as they lie, and to sing them; or to translate them into metre, and then to sing them; or to take them as others have translated them into metre, and so to sing them, is that which we find not so much as one of the Primitive Christians to have done before us; and how we should suppose such things to be acceptable to God in His

worship, I know not." It is not "a bare recital of Sacred Scripture" that is implied; but "some part of the heavenly mystery, or mind of God contained therein, with a present capacity of fitness and spirit to sound forth His praise that giveth the Word, and to the profit of the Church." But this is a gift not bestowed upon every one, any more than the ability to edify; yet "he that hath a Psalm, or gift to praise God in His Church, ought to sing there to edify others."

The same things are virtually repeated when speaking "of the *manner how* Christians are to sing praises to God in church assemblies," only with greater detail. "The only certain and undoubted manner is this:—That such persons as God hath gifted to tell forth His mighty acts, and to recount His special Providences, and upon whose hearts God hath put a lively sense of present mercies, *should have the liberty and convenient opportunity to celebrate the high praises of God, one by one;*" that all this is "to be done with a pleasant and cheerful voice, that may serve to express the joys conceived in the heart of him that singeth, the better to affect the hearts of all the congregation with the wondrous works of God, and the continual goodness which He sheweth toward the children of men, and especially towards His people." This method "of one only singing the praises of God is *perhaps but rarely done in these days, at least not as it should be;* yet I know not of any that deny the thing to be lawful." It certainly requires "as great an ability, and as spiritual a mind, as any other service performed in the churches, and therefore calls for as great study, and holy waiting upon God for His help in the performance or ministerial part thereof."

But as for "plain song, prick-song, descant, or other poetical strains," they are "men's devices," and "very much unlike the gravity of Christian worship." "The very Papists deride the singing of David's Psalms in a rhythmical way," especially those translated by Beza, calling them "Geneva jiggs;" and the use of such Psalms, "though better translated than they

are, as a part of our rational worship is thought by one writer to be as ridiculous as making our addresses to persons in authority by epistles and orations out of Tully." To which Grantham rejoins: "But if David's Psalms, though better translated than they are, will not pass in the judgment of this learned Protestant for a part of rational worship, I marvel how such as pretend to a higher pitch of reformation should think that their private poetisms should find acceptance in the churches of God. *How much better is it to content ourselves where we are than to take up such fancies?*"

"Musical singing with a multitude of voices together in rhime and metre is liable," says Grantham, "to so many just exceptions, as may caution any good Christian to beware of it." (1) The very founders and uses soon became disgusted with it. (2) The very novelty of it makes against it. (3) Instruction is prevented, "for when all speak, none can hear;" and "spiritual gifts are drowned by the voice of men and women who have no giftst a all." (4) None so singing "can be confident they have done the will of God." (5) Singing other men's words "opens a gap for forms of prayer." (6) It makes void the way of singing which is undoubtedly warranted. (7) Once permit the singing by art pleasant tunes, and you will bring music, and even instruments back again into public worship, and then, farewell all solemnity. (8) You even make this proposition true—that no Christian Church is complete in the order of God's worship, without some skill in poetry and music.

Grantham closes by saying, "I would not be understood to censure those that differ from me in understanding or practice in this particular, who have a pious mind in setting forth God's praises in some of the modes opposed"—a charity which was unfortunately not largely imitated, as we shall presently see. He however wishes that "the baptized churches especially would more seriously consider this matter than hitherto, that this service might be better known to the glory of God and the good of the churches."

Mr. Keach introduces Singing at Horselydown.

The words of Grantham point to a change which was already beginning to creep slowly over some of the songless sanctuaries of the Baptists, at least of the other section, if not of his own. Among the persons "who had found out a way to compose hymns, and set them out that others might sing the same things with them," was Benjamin Keach, who had already been, at the time Grantham published his book, for ten years the devoted and exemplary pastor of Goat-street, Horselydown. Indeed, according to one complainant, Mr. Keach was the first minister who introduced singing in that church; but the only concession originally permitted was, that they should sing after the Lord's Supper. To the great trouble of the unmusical brethren in the church, "many of the honest hearers, who stayed to see that holy administration, sung with them." The next innovation was, singing on public thanksgiving days; but this was continued for a brief period, and is spoken of in 1691 as ceasing twelve or fourteen years previously. An attempt was made to revive it when a stranger occupied the pulpit, and apparently with some little success. The minister "had ended his exercise, when a hymn was given up to him, we know not," say the songless few, "by whom, (except it were by Mr. Keach's means,) which he read and sung, and the people with him; but this was not in the least by the appointment of the church, but was an imposition on them, and a surprise to the minister himself, and his great trouble, when he had considered of it, as he himself told many of us afterwards."

Keach's Defence of Singing.

The dissentients at Horselydown found a valorous champion in Isaac Marlow, who had, in 1690, published a *Discourse Concerning*—or rather *against—Singing*. Mr. Keach followed

with his *Breach Repaired in God's Worship;* or, *Singing Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, proved to be a holy ordinance of Jesus Christ.* Very gravely and very soberly does the good pastor set to work, in this book, to show "that there are various kinds of voices; namely, (1) a shouting noise of the tongue; (2) a crying noise; (3) a preaching voice, or noise made that way; (4) a praying, or praising voice; and, lastly, (5) a singing voice. All these," says Mr. Keach, without a smile (in fact his face, judged from the portrait prefixed to one edition of his book, looks as if it could rarely smile), "are distinct from each other. Singing," he declares, "is not a simple *heart* singing, or mental singing; but a musical melodious modulation, or tuning of the voice." "Singing is a duty performed always with the voice, and cannot be done without the tongue." The duty of singing is then enforced on various grounds. It is an ancient practice: "angels sang at the first creation." "The devil hates it, is a great enemy of singing, and doth not love the Hosannas to Christ." It is a moral duty. It is right to use the faculty we have for singing, since God creates nothing in vain. It is a part of natural religion. It has been practised by God's people in all ages: before the giving of the Law, under the Law, under the Gospel, and after Apostolic times.

Keach, according to Marlow, had twelve months before the publication of this book, "vehemently pressed forward" the duty of singing, at "the first and greatest Assembly" of Particular Baptists, challenged to dispute the matter, and had been accepted; but the Assembly "thought it not convenient to spend much time that way." He also points out that Hercules Collins was the *first* to broach the assertion among the Particular Baptists that singing was "a public duty," in his appendix to his *Orthodox Catechism*, published in 1680; and that Keach followed in the same strain both in his *Tropes and Figures* (1682), and his *Treatise on Baptism, or Gold Refined* (1689).

"The Leader of the Opposition"—Isaac Marlow.

The controversy once opened, was carried on with great eagerness on both sides for the next eight or ten years. Marlow followed Keach's *Breach Repaired*, by a treatise entitled *The Truth Soberly Defended* (1692). Singing is therein designated "false worship," "error," "dangerous and destructive to the peace and well-being of our churches, and to the pure worship of God therein," a practice from which he hopes all "sober, impartial, and inquiring Christians, may keep themselves undefiled." Hanserd Knollys had printed a sheet for singing, often quoted against Marlow; but Marlow thinks, that the strictures in that on himself are to be charitably judged as arising "through the failure of Knollys' intellects, he being then between ninety-two and ninety-three years of age." As for Joseph Wright's book, *Folly Detected*, animadverting on Marlow's first publication, "it showeth folly in the face of it, wherein there is neither spiritual savour, nor common civility; but in divers parts of it a breathing forth of passion, anger, and great contempt." Hard words, with a vengeance: but in this singing controversy a good many hard words were uttered, and men's passions ran high. Even Mr. Keach has dealt out to him a fair share of rebuke. Marlow complains of being styled by both Wright and Keach, "a person not fit to meddle with divine things," a man "that plays the part of a sophister," "justifying Quaker's silent meetings," "little better than an enthusiast," "a mischievous person who fires his neighbour's house, and burns down his own," "a ridiculous scribbler," "a brazen forehead," "a non-churcher," "a ranter," "a novice," "an ignoramus," and other equally contemptuous terms. "By this way," says Marlow, "they have laboured to aliene the minds of Christians from me."

There is a good deal of querulous complaint in Marlow's book; but these expressions show how much occasion had been given for his reference to Mr. Keach's "hot spirit." The

singing every Lord's-day at Horselydown, which was the third innovation, had, in Marlow's judgment, been smuggled in by unfair means. "A church-meeting was called on Sunday evening after the public worship was over." Mr. Keach obtained a majority of votes; but, adds Marlow, "a major vote is no proof of truth." Unquestionably: but the point to be decided then was, not "the truth," but the adoption of singing after every service on the Sunday. The majority carried the day; but the dissentients soon after seceded from Horselydown, formed themselves into a fresh community, and established the church-meeting at Maze Pond.*

The hearty personalities of several pamphlets published at this time on the singing controversy, led the Particular Baptist General Assembly, for the credit of the denomination, to take up the matter. Seven brethren were appointed to examine certain pamphlets, and report thereon, the offenders agreeing to abide by their decision. Marlow was not among them. The committee sharply reproved the pamphleteers for "their uncharitable, unsavoury censures, reflections, and reproaches." The books were desired to be brought in, and left at the disposal of the Assembly. The writers were warned, that if they repeated their offences, "they will be remarked;" but they are entreated by the committee, "on their knees, to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." The members of the churches were besought neither "to buy, sell, give, or disperse," certain pamphlets named, among which was Marlow's *Truth Soberly Defended.*

Crosby is evidently in error when he says that "a stop was thus put to the troubles that threatened the baptized churches upon this controversy;" although it may be quite true that "many of them from that time sung the praises of God in their

* "They continued to adhere steadfastly to the principle of the original constitution till after the death of their second minister, Rev. Edward Wallen; but Abraham West, in 1739, made it a condition of his accepting the pastoral office, that singing should be introduced into public worship."—WILSON'S *Dissenting Churches.*

public assemblies who had not used that practice before." * Marlow's *Controversy of Singing brought to an end* was issued a few years subsequently; and instead of ending the debate, gave it a fresh impetus. In this book Marlow thus states the difference between himself and his opponents:—"The question between us and our brethren is not, whether any such thing as vocal melodious singing is exhorted unto in the New Testament, for this we freely own; but the controversie lyes herein, viz.: (1) Whether the saints were moved to the exercise of it in the Apostle's time, only as an extraordinary spiritual gift, depending on divine inspiration as some other gifts did; or, that it was appointed as a constant gospel ordinance in the church in an ordinary administration also. (2) In what external manner it was thus exercised; whether, *in a prestinted form of words, made in artificial rhimes*; or, as the Spirit, by His more immediate dictates, gave them utterance. And (3) Who was it that sang? Whether the minister sang alone; or with him a promiscuous assembly of professors, and profane men and women, with united voices together."

Marlow's Strictures on Allen's Essay.

Another singing brother had entered the lists in place of Mr. Keach—Mr. Richard Allen. This worthy minister had shown his willingness to suffer for the truth during the times of persecution. He had been pastor of the church at Turners' Hall for many years, and was now minister at Barbican. During his previous pastorate he had been fined, and had lain for some weeks in Newgate. On one occasion, whilst preaching at the early hour of five o'clock in the morning, some troopers surprised the congregation, abused the people, and from being incensed against the preacher, threw one of the forms at him as he stood in the pulpit. Although regarded as a General Baptist in sentiment, his chief friends were among the Particular Baptist ministers. Sympathising with Mr. Keach's

* Crosby, vol. iii. 271.

opinions on singing, he had published *An Essay to Prove Singing of Psalms with Conjoint Voices, a Christian Duty.* Marlow now turns his facile sword to meet the new comer. Mr. Allen had urged, in his *Essay*, that as men had the faculty not only for praising God in their hearts, but also in their mouths, it was therefore their moral duty to use both faculties. "Is it?" says Marlow. "Then why not all *other* faculties too—dancing, laughing, shouting, whistling, since these are as much faculties as singing?" Mr. Allen thinks men may use a Scriptural form of sound words in prayer. But it follows not, therefore, that there is any ground for men of a failable [fallible] spirit to compose a form of prayer in their own words, and impose it upon others. "Exactly so," adds Marlow, "and we have the same dislike to stinted forms of hymns made by Mr. Allen and his fellow-singers, unless he would have us believe him and them to be infailable penmen of hymns for Gospel worship." Nay, even "the utterance of David's words, 'As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks,' is to teach people hypocrisy." Mr. Allen does not think, on the other hand, "that there is anything in the Psalms but what every Christian, by the gracious illumination and influence of the Holy Spirit, may sing with a truly Christian spirit, and with much comfort and edification to themselves;" in which opinion he will now be supported by thousands of godly men. But Marlow makes merry over this statement, and asks, "Whether they can so sing for their comfort and edification, 'I have more understanding than all my teachers,' 'I understand more than the ancients;' but if every one, or any, of Mr. Allen's church should tell him so, in the common way of speaking, I query if he would not think them wise in their own conceits." As to Mr. Allen's assertion, that some of the Psalms were written in rhyme, "it shows that he is no Hebrew scholar;" "the rhyming at the end" of the Psalms he quotes "only happen so;" and "several Jews," to whom Marlow had appealed, declared "that there were no rhymes in the Hebrew."

The taste for congregational singing had evidently spread in London since the controversy began, from the fact that Marlow now "grieves that so many of our London elders and ministers are blemished with such rotten notions," and that "our holy profession and reformation is stained with so great a faction as they have raised." The practice of congregational singing will, in his opinion, lead to "baptism, and all upholders of it, being contemned and frowned at," whatever expenditure there may be of labour and men "to stop the gap that is opening." At the thought of his own efforts, Marlow grows prophetic:— "Whether our singing elders and fellow Christians will hear, or whether they will forbear; I believe that my testimony to the truth will outlive them, and their folly, committed in God's Israel, whatever may become of me." But "where, with your innovations," says Marlow, "do you design to stop?" "You have introduced this 'piece of false worship:' what will be the next?"

As to the men whose names were put to *A Sober Reply to Mr. R. Steed's Epistles*, they have thereby proclaimed themselves the ringleaders in this innovation; forgetting that "since the yoak of persecution has been taken from off our necks there has been woful demonstrations of decay, of true godliness, and such troubles and disorders as I have never heard of among us before, *the occasion whereof in part* has arisen from this piece of false worship which they have appeared for, and so have endeavoured to introduce into our churches."

"Even Mr. Keach's failure to get the sanction of the General Assembly to his love of singing, did not deter one of your number, Mr. Thomas Whinnel, from attempting, at the last meeting, craftily and surreptitiously, in combination with others, on the last day of the Assembly, when most of the country messengers were gone home, and many of the messengers of the churches in the city were absent, a time intended only for them that remained to put in order what had been agreed on in the former days of their Assembly that it might be presented

to the churches—did then present something to be debated concerning persons retaining their communion with a church whereof they were members, though the practice of common singing were contrary to their common judgment and consciences set up in it; but being then so unseasonably presented in the absence of the greater part of the Assembly, it was witnessed against by many then present, as that which was not fit to be debated at that time; it savouring more of a political contrivance, than of honesty and candour."

These queries of Marlow, addressed to the same persons, read strangely enough in our day: "(1) Whether you believe it lawful, by the command of God, for you that are members of a separate baptized church, to have full communion at the Lord's table, with a church of the Independent profession, who are not baptized on a profession of faith, but only sprinkled in their infancy? (2) *Whether you count it lawful for you to have such full communion with those Independent brethren, and can sing with them, as they do in public worship*, that then you have any ground to make it a case of conscience to maintain a separate church state from them?"

Marlow singles out, among the special advocates for congregational singing who deserve his censure, William Kiffin, Robert Steed, George Barrat, and E. Man. They are all charged, like Keach, with "vehemently and frequently pressing the question" on the attention of various Assemblies, with preaching this "common set-form of singing," and "with inserting in print in the view of all men" their opinions thereon. For his own part, he is full of fear about this "piece of human art, introduced for a piece of gospel worship." "Trouble and distraction" have already come as the consequence; and "unless the churches themselves use great care and faithfulness in preserving the purity of those congregations that are better principled than their elders, or some of their ministers, a few years will produce a great alteration in divers of our churches about London." To such an extent had "the infection" of "set-

form singing" spread, that, in Marlowe's opinion, there were in 1696 but few churches in the metropolis, "but what have either their elders or their ministers" under its poison. "When the better principled are removed by death, these men will step into their places; and then, with their removal, and the wearing away of the ancient members,—what may we expect? It will be, as Dr. Owen says, '*Like priest, like people.*'" Hos. 4

E. H.'s "Scripture Proof."

The same year that Marlow published his last book (1696), a certain "E. H." issued a book, entitled, *Scripture Proof for Singing of Scripture Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs. Or, an Answer to several Queries and Objections frequently made use of to stumble and turn aside young Christians from their duty to God in singing Psalms gathered out of Scripture Truth. To which is added, the Testimony of some Learned Men to Prove that Scripture Psalms are intended by all those three words, Psalms, Hymns, and Songs, used by the Apostles—Eph.* v. 19; *Col.* iii. 16." The book was prefaced by "an Epistle," signed by Nathaniel Mather and Edward Chauncy, which runs as follows: "The author is by face wholly unknown to us; but we have, with much satisfaction and delight, perused his ensuing treatise, finding it to be solid and judicious, and full of Scripture light and strength, and singularly adapted and suited to enlighten and establish plain Christians, whose consciences are determined by, and faith bottomed in, the Scriptures. As to his opinion, that nothing should be sung in public worship but Scripture Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, thereby excluding the hymns of human composure, by a private gift, which some sing in their solemn assemblies, we do freely concur with him; and heartily wish that those who practice otherwise would a little better consider what they do. We know not anything that such can allege for their way, seeing God hath furnished us with such full supply of spiritual

songs of His own inditing, and seeing there is not any intimation in the Scriptures that it was ever practised among the people of God of old."

Dr. Russell on Allen's Essay.

Yet another pamphlet appeared in this somewhat prolific year of the singing controversy, 1696. This time our valiant old friend, Dr. Russell, breaks a lance with Mr. Richard Allen. He styles his book, *Some Brief Animadversions on Mr. Allen's Essay*. Mr. Allen had argued that "the common practice of singing with rhime, and conjoint voices was a Christian duty," and Dr. Russell, being one of the old fashioned General Baptists, who disbelieved in such singing altogether, undertakes to "examine" Mr. Allen's arguments and "refute" them. The book is valuable, if only for the side-lights thrown on Baptists of that time, apart from the special subject on which it treats. Like Marlow, Russell grieves over "the late troublers of the denomination, who have introduced this new human invention of singing David's Psalms in rhime and metre, with conjoint voices;" and also, like Marlow, he hopes the words he addresses "to the messengers, elders, and brethren of the baptized" churches, may be the means of restoring union and peace. He points out the fact, that some of the ministers who endorsed Mr. Allen's *Essay*, "and fixed their names to it by way of approbation, omit to practice singing in their own congregations;" and declares that "Mr. Keach's, and some other congregations are the sole representatives of the modern innovation." It is also a source of grief that these innovators "have corrupted some of our young men with this notion of theirs about singing," especially singling out one of them by name—"that hopeful young branch, Mr. Thomas Harrison." The defection is the more painful to Dr. Russell, since "his (Mr. Harrison's) father was once a parish minister, *had his eyes opened about singing in the art of singing, and regarded the common way of singing as will-worship*, as much as Common

Prayer or infant's sprinkling;" and this "indiscreet action" does not "bespeak that respect for his father's memory which he ought to show." Before this "hopeful young branch had endorsed Mr. Allen's *Essay*," he ought to have been able to answer the grounds of his father's opinion to the contrary. Yet, he "does not blame him so much as others; and, notwithstanding this slip, he has more honourable thoughts of him than it is proper here to express."

We shall see presently how "young Mr. T. H." answers Dr. Russell's public appeal to him. There is also another challenge to his opponents of harsh treatment, or at any rate, "of unkindness to their old servant who wrote the *Queries*, since they have turned him out of his house, and taken all his salary from him, notwithstanding he was one of their own members, and had served them faithfully, even to old age, and is yet in communion with them." This is also answered by-and-bye.

Russell waxes very indignant as he thinks of the singing of "rhimes by a set-form," in baptized congregations, and "that by all the people together, whether saints or sinners, members or no members, whether they are young or old, understand or not understand, what is sung." It is a "mere human invention of *ballad singing!*" cries out the irate doctor. "Why, it first began with Clement Marot, the groom of the bedchamber of the French King, Francis 1st. He used to make songs for the king; and was at last prevailed upon by Fr. Vetablus, to relinquish his trifling doggrel, and to turn David's Psalms into French metre; that he did thus translate the first thirty; and the king sang them, as he had done the former ballads. After this, Beza and Calvin encouraged Marot, when at Geneva, to turn more of them into rhime; and they were then brought into use in their Assemblies." If Mr. Allen cannot bring another instance of David's Psalms being translated into metre in any language before this attempt of Marot's, "let him forbear thus fooling with his new method of ballad-singing; for it

is no better." Even self-interest might have some weight. "Your ballad-singing hath a tendency to your ruin, having begun already to diminish your numbers, and two congregations are obliged to unite into one to keep up their reputation, and supply that deficiency singing in rhime hath made in the loss of their members. *A greater part of your members that remain are so dissatisfied, that so soon as you begin to tune your pipes, they immediately depart, like men affrighted.*"

After declaring, like Marlow, that there was no rhime in Hebrew; and if the Jews sang, their customs are not binding upon us, Dr. Russell bursts out into the following rhetorical passage:—"The king's daughter now is all glorious within, endowed with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, and is to act all her duties from a principle of grace and holiness. She needs no instruments of music to stir her affections, nor any flesh-pleasing tunes, or musical rhimes, to make her merry; for the Spirit fills her with joy and peace through believing; and when He hath a mind to glorify Himself by any outward melody, He will not want the assistance of our singers to dictate tunes to express it by. And, indeed, it is strange they should think that no praise offered up to God, in and through His Son, should please Him so well as the rhimes of Hopkins, Sternhold, and others."

Allen's "Vindication."

Of course, Mr. Allen very soon followed Dr. Russell's *Animadversions*, with *A Brief Vindication of an Essay to prove Singing of Psalms, &c., from Dr. Russell's Animadversions, and Mr. Marlow's Remarks, &c.* In fact, the three pamphlets all appeared in the same year. Mr. Allen hopes, in his "Address to the Christian reader," "if he is a little sharp, it will be admitted with a candid interpretation, considering the temper of the man with whom he has to deal;" and "the five champions," as Russell called the men who endorsed Mr. Allen's previous book (Joseph Maisters, William Collins,

Joseph Stennett, John Pigott, and Thomas Harrison) have also *their* "address to the reader." They "see no reason to retract their words of praise." They are "not convinced by the animadverter, whatever swelling words he may use against Mr. Allen." They would seriously ask him, "Whether he has used his pen as became a Christian, nay, as became a man of good sense and temper; whether a charitable disposition of mind would not set him off to better advantage than all these big pretences to a great stock of reason and learning, the vain and empty conceit of which, while it prompts him to look down upon others with a supercilious scorn, renders him, in reality, an object of pity than the envy of those that are truly learned and ingenious." Again, we say, these are hard words; but harder follow. The "five champions" wish Dr. Russell "ballast with sail, and that his heart may be as well furnished as his head." They are "troubled that he could not satisfy his resentment, and blunt the edge of his passion in striking at their little names, without profanely ridiculing an ordinance of God; and hope he will beware of unsavoury jests in the future."

That there was really some ground for these strictures, Mr. Allen proceeds to show. Dr. Russell had declared that Mr. Allen and his friends were "guilty of adding to the Word of God," of "detracting from it," of "dealing deceitfully with it," of "using strategems to beguile the ignorant and the unstable souls," of "cheating English readers," of "wilfully or ignorantly opposing against the truth," of "belieing the Son of God," and "of bringing a dreadful curse upon themselves." As for Beza, "he was an old friend and merry companion," "a buffoon, and common ballad maker;" and as for Mr. Allen, and his friends, "they were ballad-singers, and made a noise like madmen."

Mr. Allen then proceeds to note some of the misconceptions of Dr. Russell as to his own view of the question in dispute. He certainly thinks that "it is lawful for one voice alone to

sing the praises of God; but, in a public assembly, it is much more warrantable for the whole congregation to sing together with conjoint voices, than for one person to sing there alone;" that he and his friends "sing psalms in rhime, not as the only way, but as the most facile way to sing them harmoniously;" that even "rhime and metre" are not absolutely necessary to singing praises to God in a proper sense, "but the use of the voice" is necessary. As for the doctor's remarks about Hebrew, he has a good deal to say, and quotes various passages to show his assertions were not without warrant, among others the song of Miriam. He could also justify the same inequality of lines from Cowley's *Ode on the Passion of Christ*," and then breaks out into a little ode of his own :—

> "Alas! great Cowley! famous in thy time!
> It now appears thou'st neither verse nor rhime,
> In these unequal lines, which lamely go—
> Silence!—the Cambridge doctor says 'tis so."

As to the slander about "the Querist" being turned out of his house, Allen remarks, "whereas his place is conferred upon a person as much different from us in the point of singing as himself; and the author of the *Queries* well knows that it was not me, but one nearer to himself, that was the cause of his being desired to quit his lodgings, of which I suppose the doctor could not be ignorant."

Thomas Harrison adds a postscript to Allen's pamphlet; in which he declares, that "it cannot but touch me to my quick to be charged with disrespect to my father's memory. I never knew that a son's being of a judgment different from his father, and publishing it to the world, was inconsistent to his father's memory. I was but just entered upon the sixth year of my age when my honoured father exchanged this life for a better; so that it is not very probable that I should remember his instructions about singing, if he gave any; and seeing that he never wrote upon the subject, I must needs be unacquainted with them." As to his name appearing with the

other four to Mr. Allen's pamphlet, "no man asked me but Mr. Allen. I did not speak with the others about it. I needed no persuasion; but subscribed freely, and see now no cause to repent."

Allen adds a second postscript, in which, after showing that he also went to the same Jews as Marlow, and got a somewhat different answer, they contending for equal feet as rhyme, and he that it meant like sounds at the end of the lines; and firing a farewell shot at Dr. Russell, as agreeing with "Julian, the apostate, who was the only opposer among the ancients of the statement about the Psalms rhyming," he concludes, with words of charity and hope: "As we believe our brethren that neglect singing the praise of God live (through mistake), in the omission of that which is to us an undoubted duty, *yet we are willing to bear lovingly with them till they are further enlightened;* so we hope, notwithstanding Mr. Marlow's suggestion about the ejection of all such ministers, that they will also walk lovingly and peaceably with us as brethren."

There is a third postscript from W. Collins, "to the Christian reader." This explains how a passage which had been falsely translated, came to appear. Collins lays the blame on the printer's overseer, who altered the translation himself, on his own responsibility; and Collins demanding that the leaf on which the misrendering occurs should be reprinted and inserted in the end. Marlow still repeated his charge, and Collins brought the matter before an Assembly of elders and messengers of the Devonshire-square meeting, when, Marlow having nothing to say in defence, was condemned. Dr. Russell is also charged with repeating the slander, since Marlow's discomfiture; "but," says Collins, with some heat, "a man that favours his (Russell's) notions, although a vile blasphemer, as Servetus, or a popishly-affected doctor (Wilson), shall have his high enconiums; but he that opposeth him, in the least degree, must expect a dose of his most churlish physick. The Lord forgive him, and such as walk in his steps."

Claridge's Reply to Allen.

The following year, Richard Claridge, a new combatant enters the arena. Claridge was once rector of Poppleton, Warwickshire; and, adopting Baptist sentiments, was baptized in 1691, at Bromsgrove. He settled in London as the pastor of Bagnio-court church, afterwards removed to Currier's Hall, better known as the Cripplegate meeting. He was a man of considerable learning, as his pamphlet shows. After a short time Claridge became a Quaker. His *Answer to Richard Allen's Essay, Vindication, and Appendix* was at first approved by Steed and Marlow; but greatly altering "the copy" before it appeared, these unmusical brethren withdrew their endorsement, and as a consequence only eight sheets out of the twenty were printed. A single citation, his objection to angels singing, is all we we can find space to give:—"This is a dark region our souls are now in; and we know but very little of the state and employment of the heavenly angels. That they are glorious spirits, and do continually adore and magnify God, the Holy Scriptures inform us; but that they praise Him with vocal singing, the Sacred Records are not only silent, but it is also work incompetent to spirits, as such, who are incorporeal beings, and so incapable, through the defects of proper external organs, of a vocal celebration of His adorable perfections."

How many other pamphlets on the subject of singing were issued after this period, it is not easy to discover. But the practice of congregational singing was still advocated by many ministers long before the churches were willing to adopt it. William Collins tried hard to introduce it into the church at Petty France, in 1698, but without effect; yet after Mr. Collins' death, in 1702, the attempt was renewed by his successor with better success; although a division was occasioned by it, and the seceders went off to Turner's Hall, and invited Ebenezer Wilson, from Bristol, to be their minister. This is the history of other churches in London, and elsewhere,

at least among the Particular Baptists; but the records of many of these struggles have not been preserved.*

General Baptists and Singing.

The General Baptists continued to oppose congregational singing for a still longer period than their Calvinistic brethren, Grantham's opinions and influence were still predominant until so late as 1733. Before the controversy fairly began among the Particular Baptists, it was thought needful by the General Baptist Assembly in 1689 "to consider the question of promiscuous singing Psalms, either the whole together, or they in conjunction with those who were not of their communion." The record of the case is very curious, and throws some little further light on the matter. "The persons holding the affirmative in this question were desired to show the Assembly what Psalms they made use of for the *matter*, and what rules they did settle upon, for the *manner*." There was thereupon produced, "not the metres composed by Messrs. Sternhold and Hopkins, but a book of metres composed by one Mr. Barton, and the rules produced to sing these Psalms as set down *secundem artem;* viz., as the musicians do sing according to their gamut,—*Sol, fa, la, my, ray*, &c., &c.; which appeared so strangely foreign to the evangelical worship that it was not conceived anywise safe for the churches to admit such carnal formalities; but to rest satisfied in this, till we can see something more perfect in this case, *that as prayer of one in the church is the prayer of the whole, as a church, so the singing of one in the church is the singing of the whole church;* and as he that prayeth in the church is to perform

* A pious and aged woman once visited Dr. Gill, to relieve her mind of her great trouble. It came out that her grief arose from a new tune which the clerk of Carter-lane had just introduced. "Sister," asked Dr. Gill, "do you understand singing?" "No, sir." "What? can't you sing?" "No, sir." The doctor, dealing gently with her on account of her age, rejoined, "Sister, what tunes should you like to sing?" "Why, sir, I should very much like to sing *David's tunes*." "Well," said Dr. Gill, "if you can get David's tunes, we will try to sing them!"

the service as of the ability which God giveth, even so, he that singing praises in the church ought to perform that service as of the ability received of God; that as a mournful voice becomes the duty of prayer, so a joyful voice, with gravity, becomes the duty of praising God with a song in the Church of God." This opinion was endorsed "with the general approbation of the Assembly."

Nearly fifty years after this, that is, in 1733, a case was presented to the General Assembly of the General Baptists from Northamptonshire, complaining "that some churches in their district among the General Baptists had fallen into the way of singing the Psalms of David, or other men's composures, with tunable notes, and a mixed multitude; which way of singing," say the complainants, "appears to us wholly unwarrantable from the Word of God." The Northamptonshire Association want to know whether the General Assembly look upon this as "a thing indifferent," or whether they "disapprove of it, and use any means to bring men off from it." To them it appears "an innovation." The Assembly confessed, "that though *some very few* practise singing in a manner different from us in the general," yet that that was not a sufficient reason for their exclusion. There did not appear, in the Assembly's judgment, any clear statement in Scripture about the manner of singing, although singing itself is frequently mentioned. They would that all were of one mind; "but as the weakness of human understanding is such that things appear in different lights to different persons, such a concord is rather to be desired than expected in this world." They were, therefore, unwilling, either to dispute the question, or to impose their opinion and practise upon others.

On the commencement of the Eighteenth Century congregational singing was at a low ebb in this country, even in the Establishment. One writer declares that many church choirs had only half a dozen tunes, or fewer, from which to select; and as for "our quality and gentry," says Nathaniel Tate,

"you may hear them in the responses, and reading-psalms; but the giving out of a singing-psalm seems to strick them dumb." A better version of the Psalms,* and a larger and more varied stock of tunes, soon led to a change in this matter. Nor were the Dissenters unaffected by these improvements. Men were everywhere asking "whether harmony in their voices would fright grace from their hearts? or whether singing out of tune was making melody unto the Lord?" The answer was found in the increasing attention which was everywhere paid to psalmody, and in the ready acceptance, by Baptists among the rest, of the excellent hymns written by men of different churches, which very soon became the common property of Christians of every name.

* The following story illustrates the prejudice of the illiterate against any New Versions. The Bishop of Ely told Mr. Tate that on first using Dr. Patrick's New Version at family worship, he observed that a servant maid, who possessed a musical voice, was silent for several days together. He asked her the reason; whether she were not well, or had a cold? adding, that he was much delighted to hear her, because she sung so sweetly, and kept the rest in tune. "I am well enough in health," she answered, "and have no cold. But if you must needs know the plain truth of the matter, as long as you sing Jesus Christ's Psalms I sung along with ye; but now you sing Psalms of your own invention, you may sing by yourselves!"

CHAPTER XIII.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Minister's Clubs.

"A CLUB," says Dr. Johnson, "is an assembly of good fellows, met under certain conditions." Now while we should be sorry to say that the clubs of Baptist ministers which existed in London in the days of Queen Anne and the first of the Georges were not exclusively composed of "good fellows;" yet their object in meeting differed entirely from the ordinary clubs of that period. Clubs were then founded for almost every conceivable object—innocent and infamous, foolish and laudable. It was the age of clubs, and Baptist ministers were not the only staid and sober people, nor the only ministers, who founded such societies, or boards. The Baptist ministers' club, like the other clubs of dissenting ministers, was rather a periodical meeting at some convenient place for the transaction of local or denominational business, than a club in the ordinary meaning of the term. Perhaps the chief points of resemblance between their clubs and others of that age were these: they met weekly or monthly at some respectable coffee-house; they balloted for new members; they decided that "no person should be introduced to their meetings who was known to be disagreeable to any member of it;" and they usually ended their meetings, when the graver business was ended, in pleasant social chat. One item, in regard to the

rent of the room in which some of these clubs met, tells its own tale. The rent had been four guineas per annum; but it was agreed to pay sixteen shillings more, "*in consideration of the rise in tobacco.*"

The earliest society, or club, of Calvinistic Baptist ministers, of which we have any record, was already organised, and in full working order in 1714; but how long it had been in existence does not appear. It met weekly at the Hanover Coffee-house, Finch-lane, London.* In these days of "union," it is worth noting that the business, about which the club was chiefly occupied in 1714, was *how to secure a closer fellowship between the Particular and the General Baptist ministers.* The General Baptists had been somewhat ruffled in temper because the ministers of the Particular Baptists were the sole representatives of the Baptist denomination present at the meetings of the Deputies of the Three Denominations. The cause of offence was speedily removed; and the question of still closer union, or, as the club expressed it, "a better correspondence," immediately sprang up." The minister's society at the Hanover Coffee-house warmly advocated this "better correspondence," and it was agreed to hold a united monthly meeting of the elders or pastors of both sections of the denomination. Crosby tells us that this fair promise brought little fruit, and offers his own explanation of the cause. "The union was the result of ecclesiastics only, who are rarely found to be good politicians. Had they joined with themselves one or two from each of their churches of the most prudent and moderate laity, I doubt not but the glorious harmony and good correspondence would have been continued now. [Crosby is writing in 1740.] Let them but try the experiment. The whole Baptist interest united in such a manner must consequently tend very much to its reputation and increase." This explanation is termed by Rev. J. Ivimey,

* There was at this period another board or club, of ministers which met at the British Coffee-house, London, with which the Baptist Board occasionally met for the transaction of business common to them both.

"laconic." He is evidently disposed to question whether the fact of the union being "one of ecclesiastics only," was the sole cause of the decline and ultimate cessation of these united monthly meetings. "Mr. Crosby was a member and a deacon of the church in which Mr. Benjamin Stinton, brother-in-law to Mr. Crosby, had succeeded their excellent father-in-law, Mr. Benjamin Keach. He (Crosby) might be one of 'the most prudent and moderate of the laity;' and everybody knows that prudence and moderation in a deliberating assembly are always valuable, and, it cannot be denied, have sometimes been greatly needed, not only by ecclesiastics, *but even by laymen*, notwithstanding they may have considered themselves good politicians."*

The next notice of the club reveals it in a different character. It is *appealed to by the French Protestant ministers who had been living in London since the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes*, (Oct. 24, 1685); and from the tone of their appeal, we find that this society was then regarded as the customary channel of communicating with the Baptist churches in the Metropolis. The character of the letter, and the venerable age of the writers, give it an unusual interest.

"*To the Reverend and most Honoured Brethren, the Pastors and Ministers of the Baptist congregations.*

"The French ministers, banished from their native land for the cause of their holy religion, humbly represent to you that in the year 1696, the Court having suspended for some time the subsistence which used to be granted them, they were obliged to apply themselves to the charity of their most honoured brethren, the ministers of the baptized churches, who kindly helped them in their necessities. At present being afflicted with the same or greater necessities than ever, by having been forsaken for the last two years and a half of the Queen's reign, and a year and a half of King George's, they take the liberty again to implore your Christian and brotherly assistance, humbly beseeching you, if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of charity, if any communion of spirit, if any cordial affections, you would complete your joy in assisting us in such a manner as your piety and charity should think proper. Our age and continued infirmities warning us every day of our

* Ivimey's *History of English Baptists*, vol. iii., p. 113.

approaching end, give us just cause to believe that this will be the last time that we shall address you, at least, in the like case. In the meanwhile we pray the Almighty to bless your persons, your families, and your churches with all blessings, temporal and eternal, which are the ardent and sincere prayers of

"—— Bacon, 77 years old,
"Francis Grouguet, 74 years old,
"John James Salixhac, 82 years old.
"Samuel Vehard, 84 years old.

"*Witness*, Mons. Gomare,
"London, July 30, 1716."

The appeal was not made in vain.

The same year the Board itself sent a letter to the whole of the Baptist churches in London about *the re-building of the old baptistery at Horsleydown*. For some years this was the *only* baptistery in London, and was in common use by all the churches. As the metropolis increased, and the churches became more numerous and more widely scattered, it was felt that one baptistery was no longer sufficient. Moreover, the old one was not central enough for the majority of the London churches, and was far too small to accommodate with comfort the many spectators that were now usually present. A new baptistery had therefore been constructed in the Barbican Chapel, the larger part of the expense being defrayed by Mr. Thomas and Mr. John Hollis, well known for their benefactions, both in England and America. This baptistery, however, was only available to those approved ministers who had received a certificate from the Messrs. Hollis. A register was kept of the names of the persons baptized on each occasion, and also of the administrators. There was a charge of two shillings per candidate, for the use of the baptistery, the suits of apparel for the persons baptized, and for attendance. In 1717 the original baptistery at Horsleydown was enlarged, and new dressing-rooms built. The place was licensed, according to the Act of Toleration, secured by trustees for the use of the churches which had become proprietors by their contributions, and continued in use for more than sixty years afterwards.

In March, 1717, the Board was busily occupied with another subject—*a projected public dispute between the Baptists and Quakers at Burton, Northamptonshire.* The more thoughtful and observant men in London of both parties, sought to dissuade them from it, partly on account of the disturbed state of the country, and a then threatened invasion, and partly "because several disaffected persons would have been glad of the least occasion to represent the peaceable Dissenters as fomenters of tumults and disorders." A joint letter was accordingly sent by them to the disputants, but without producing the slightest result. The debate was held in the presence of a great crowd of listeners. Much excitement prevailed. At the close of the day many points still remained to be discussed, and a second day's debate was appointed. Meanwhile, the Baptists in Burton, feeling that they were overmatched in the first day's dispute, determined to secure the help of a celebrated General Baptist minister of that day, Rev. Dr. John Gale, of London. Before accepting their invitation "to assist them in vindicating their principles," Dr. Gale submitted their request to the Baptist Board, at the Hanover Coffee House. Their opinion being still unchanged about the condition of the country, and the impropriety of then holding such a debate, a second conference was sought with the leading Friends in London, and a second joint letter, more earnest and emphatic than the first, signed by five members of the Board and five Quakers, was forwarded to the angry disputants. As Dr. Gale was one of the five Baptists who subscribed to the letter, it came, at least to one party, with the greater weight. "Though we hope we have," say the writers, "the same zeal for our principles, and love for whatever we have embraced of the truth, as any of our brethren, yet we think such public disputes do not tend to promote it, they being usually followed with very ill consequences, as well as that the present state of public affairs renders them at this time more especially unseasonable." Nay, the very debate already held shows the

mischief created: "some on both sides are grown hot, which," the writers of the letter, "fear, if not watched against, will destroy mutual love, arise to strife and envy, be a means to exasperate those who are of a different persuasion from us, give a handle to the enemies of both to misrepresent us to the Government, and at last end in an un-Christian strife and trouble." Both parties are therefore entreated to seek "other methods which will be less offensive, and more informing to those who are in search of the truth." This letter constrained both parties, although with evident reluctance, to relinquish their adjourned debate.

Unfortunately the records of this earlier club have been lost, so that we have no means of ascertaining when the Society was dissolved. In Jan. 1723, a *second* club of ministers was founded, mainly of those who composed the first, and the Gloucester Coffee-house was selected as the place of meeting. They also met at Blackwell's Coffee-house, and occasionally at the King's Head, St. Swithin's-alley, and Cole's Coffee-house. At the outset the club met every Monday afternoon at three o'clock; but six years after it was founded this was changed to Tuesday. On that day (and this was probably one of the reasons for the alteration), a wealthy calico-printer, a member of the church in Currier's Hall, usually had an open table for the ministers of the "Three Denominations," or "General Body of Ministers, founded in 1727." After an early dinner, the ministers adjourned to their respective clubs. The Gloucester Coffee-house club levied a fine of twopence on every late comer, or absentee, "the majority of the watches present to determine" the first point. One can see the sober brethren, all watch-in-hand, ready to rebuke the late comer, and mulct him in the customary fine.

The business of the Board at the Gloucester Coffee-house was conducted with the greatest regularity, largely owing to the admirable tact of Mr. John Noble, who frequently occupied the chair. On his death (12th June, 1730), Dr. Sayer Rudd,

still a member of the Board, broke out into "An Elegiac Essay," in which he expressed, not his own sentiments alone, but those of all his brethren. We give a few lines from it as a fair sample of the rest:—

> "Now, Zion, bid thy lucid fountains flow,
> Stream with tears, and give a loose to woe.
> No common sorrows suit a widow'd state;
> Great as our losses should our grief be great.
> Fallen is a prince in Israel to-day;
> Noble, alas! resolved to native clay.
> Noble, the heavenly messenger no more!
> Strain every nerve, and weep at every pore!"

From the nature of the business transacted, we are not far wrong in saying that this club grew into a kind of London Baptist Synod of Elders always sitting. The disputes which arose between one church and another were referred to the club for solution. Each applicant, from the respect in which the Board was held, commonly accepting as final their decision. Country churches seeking pecuniary aid in rebuilding their chapels, or removing existing debts, first appealed for sanction to the Board. Among this number are some churches, that, from their present position and comparative wealth, one would hardly expect to find. There are, for example, Harvey-lane, Leicester; College-lane, Northampton; Nottingham; Plymouth, and many others. In one case, the Board gives very emphatic advice: "Some brethren coming from Woodbridge about building a meeting-house, *were advised to be more modest in their demands;* and were promised all the assistance the brethren could give personally, although they could not make collections in their churches." Sometimes the applications of this kind came so thick and fast that the Board had to declare, "That they could attend to no more applications for that year." In August 1737, one application was advised to be withdrawn, owing to "the number of the like this year already;" but it was further agreed, "if the case appeared to us in the same light *next spring*, to give it the precedence of any other, and

encourage it as far we can." In July, 1739, the people at Malmsbury wanted to collect money for their projected chapel, but the Board argued, "that it was not advisable to proceed at this time; but that it would be best to come up to town *about February next*," promising, in the meanwhile, to recommend no other case. The church at Evershall asked, in 1742, for "help in building a meeting-place; and were told, "that it would be next considered *when the people of Beccles have finished.*" Other applications were arranged according to their merit. Wisbech was told in August in 1762, "that its case should be received in its turn, and a church in Monmouthshire were assured in November, "that their turn would be after the people of Wisbech." But at length, owing to the increasing number of "good cases brought before them, the club decided unanimously (this was in 1760), that no more cases relating to the building or repairing of meeting-houses be received and recommended by this Board." They must have rescinded this resolution, since, in 1767, there were no less than thirteen cases "recommended in their order."

Great jealousy was exercised over the life and opinions of its members. The faithful records chronicle both the names and the offences of men who were reproved or excluded. One minister was told "to humble himself before the church" of which he was pastor; "and to give fresh assurances that he would relinquish" the offence with which he was charged. "If he does not like the advice," say the Board, "let him leave the people peaceably." Another was charged, not only with being "unsound in the faith," but with "*being guilty of lying in the pulpit, because he laid down sometimes three or four heads, and promised to speak to them, and yet never explained or insisted on any of them.*" Neither charges were regarded by the Board as substantiated, and the complainants were urged to "show a more Gospel spirit." A third minister, after explaining his case, "was desired to stay another year with his people, and trust to Providence." A fourth item is unexplained.

"Mr. —— desired the ministers to interpose for his liberty; they answered: *If he would give the gentlewoman reasonable satisfaction to trouble her no further on that head*, they would endeavour his discharge." Ministers are rebuked "for being in disorder," that is, preaching, although they had not been regularly "called out" by any church; and before they are admitted into the Board, "acknowledged their disorder," and conformed to the accepted custom. The members of the Board duly announced when young men were "called out by the churches, and had publicly preached. In these cases they were permitted by vote to sit with them at the Board." The Board appoints ministers to take part in ordinations, and delays some until they themselves are satisfied; or flatly refuses to take any part in the service, if they think there is reason to demur. They also receive a humble submission from churches "who are sensible of their disorder as to their present ministry;" and when the obnoxious preacher is "dismissed, they will give them assistance and encouragement." Meanwhile, "they are to attend for further advice" the following month. They listen to appeals from churches, asking the Board "to help them to a minister;" but before complying, the "Board wishes to know what encouragement they can give him, and what they can raise, in case such an one should offer." They adjusted differences to the best of their ability, between ministers and people, and took special pains to correct the impression "that they were against encouraging ministerial gifts in the church." On one occasion they were complained of "for stretching their ministerial authority;" but they answer, that "they only gave advice agreeable to the desire of the applicants." On another, they had "a highly abusive letter" sent to them by an offending member, to which they replied with becoming meekness. At the beginning of Feb. 1734, the two Rudds, John and Sayer, on account of their anti-Trinitarian opinions, "were no longer admitted to sit as members of the society."

They had said "that the Trinitarian doctrine appears to them to be entirely humane, consisting of words and phrases of men's own inventing, which are nowhere to be met with in Scripture; such as, three persons and one Divine Essence." Dr. Sayer Rudd did not let the matter rest, but published several letters on the subject to what he styled "the venerable Board." In the first he remonstrated, and offered certain "proposals for accommodation." To this letter a brief minute confirming the previous vote was the only response. He next published what were designated by him *Impartial Reflections* on the minute received in answer to his first letter. Then followed an elaborate address, entitled, "*A Third Letter to the Reverend the Ministers of the Calvinistic Board*, occasioned by their uncharitable, as well as false insinuations concerning the author's application to the Quakers, and his attempts at conformity to the National Church. In which likewise are found his reasons for making a tour to Paris, and his leaving the congregation at Devonshire Square on his return." Of course there is a good deal of personal bitterness in this letter, but there is also enough evidence to show that the Baptist Board then exercised a lordship over individual consciences which would not now be tolerated for a single hour.

More than half a century after the expulsion of Dr. Rudd, the Board very gravely discussed certain things that had been said by Mr. Martin, "a member of the Society," in a sermon preached in Broad Street Chapel, London. The *first* French Revolution was then disturbing Europe, and the old craze about "the French invasion" was agitating men's minds. "Perhaps some of you will say," said Mr. Martin, in the passage complained of, "I fear the French will come? Well; what if they do? What then? If Christ is your life, what have you to fear? You will say, Some of your Denomination will join them. I believe they will. '*Baptized infidels, worse for mending, &c.*' Perhaps some of you will say, Some of the Pædobaptists will join them. I believe they will." On wait-

ing to see the sermon in print, and finding that the report was "not overcharged," the Board agreed unanimously that, to the best of their knowledge and belief, Mr. Martin's representations did not apply to any individual in any Protestant Dissenting churches; that not being founded in fact, these statements were highly calumnious; and that therefore Mr. Martin be no longer considered a member of their Society."

In 1765 the Board met at the Jamaica Coffee House, and continued to hold their meetings at this place for more than sixty years. One of the latest entries in the second book of the Board is very curious. It relates to the subject of vaccination, and is dated—"Jamaica Coffee House, April 26, 1803. A deputation from the Board of Directors and Medical Council of the Royal Jennerian Society having waited upon us, to give information respecting the success of the vaccine inoculation, and to solicit our recommendation of the object of the Society in our respective congregations. It was resolved unanimously, That in our opinion the vaccine inoculation may be of great public utility; and that in our individual capacity, as opportunities may occur, we will endeavour to communicate the important information which has been so clearly, so fully, and so candidly imparted to us by the Committee."

The Board showed a commendable zeal, from the earliest days of its existence, in discouraging the needless multiplication of churches too feeble to exist. It also gave advice as to the settlement of suitable ministers, and, in more than one instance, nominated a pastor, by the request of the church itself. The ministers were accustomed, not infrequently, to apply to the Board in regard to their contemplated removal to other pastorates. Thus, one brother was "advised, that he has a right to take care of his family, and if he cannot be maintained where he is, and his way is clear, he may remove."

It would be difficult to recognise the Synodical Boards of earlier days in the simple fraternal gatherings of our time known as the London Baptist Board; and yet this Board is

the lineal descendant of the club which first met in the Hanover Coffee-house, Finch-lane, and afterwards, when meeting in the Jamaica Coffee-house, under the presidency of Abraham Booth, had to increase its rate of subscription "*on account of the rise in tobacco.*"

As we turn over the faded yellow leaves of the old Minute Book, and find one name after another of the foremost men in the Denomination duly chronicled as being "admitted members of the Board," there steals over us a feeling of profound regret that the records tell us so little what manner of men they were; that the different secretaries are so provokingly silent when we would have them eloquent "of the times that went over them" and their brethren; and that, with the solitary exception of the item about tobacco, we have no picture left us of these grave and venerable men in the unrestraint and freedom of their social intercourse.

Quaint Items about Ministers and Deacons.

Little more than eighty years ago the Rev. John Rippon issued the first part of his *Baptist Annual Register*. The object, as stated on the title-page, was not entirely denominational. Besides reproducing Association letters, and furnishing "breviates," or short notes, on the business transacted at the Associations, and a sort of "our own commissioner's survey" of the Baptist churches in England and Wales, the *Register* professed to give "sketches of the state of religion among different denominations of good men at home and abroad." Of those who belonged to the last category, the Baptists in the United States had the largest share of attention given to them. This fact has produced an American demand for the *Register*, which has made these volumes increasingly scarce in this country; and it is chiefly in a few old Baptist families that the book itself is now to be found.

At first sight the contents of the *Register* do not promise modern readers very dainty fare; but on a further and more

careful examination, especially in the long footnotes given in some of the volumes, one discovers many toothsome morsels. A few of these we now give. It will be seen, that while Mr. Rippon and his friends were animated by the very laudable desire of presenting an accurate account of the Baptist denomination during the latter half of the last century, they often indulged in the freest and quaintest criticisms on ministers who were then living.

The first citations are about the churches and ministers in the county of Bedford. "*Bedford.*—They have thirty gifted persons, or more, who are encouraged to promote village worship. Some of them can lead a tune, some can devoutly read a sermon, and all can pray.

"*Blunham.*—Martin Mayle, the happy pastor of this people, has a salary of about £26 per year, a house to live in rent free, and an opportunity of keeping a cow. This, with a small income of his own, *he cheerfully devotes to the support of his wife, and four sons.*

"*Cranfield.*—W. Wakefield is the pastor. The church consists of sixteen members. They are a happy little society."

"*Luton.*—The pastor of this church, Thomas Pilley, enjoys as much vigour as though he were a young man."

Of two churches in Buckinghamshire we read: "*Chenies.*—The deacons and people (after the example of others) are advancing their pastor's income £10. *Chesham.*—The friends were *indulged*, while enlarging their own place of worship, with the use of the Independent chapel in the afternoon, and morning and evening they have comfortable meetings."

Of *Willingham*, Cambs, we are told, "The good man (John Rootham, the minister) has been much tried with an asthmatical complaint, and other disorders, so that he seldom enjoys a day's health. *But* he has a considerable congregation, and about forty members."

The pastor of *Chacewater*, Cornwall (A. Redding), "has a talent which lies chiefly in visiting the sick and poor, and in conversing with them about their soul's welfare." Nicholas

Gillard, the pastor of *Collumpton*, Devon, "is eighty. His people say that his path is like that of the just, shining more and more unto the perfect day." Daniel Sprague, the minister of *Tiverton*, enjoys a singularly robust constitution. "*He says that preaching fourteen or fifteen sermons a week strengthens his body, and invigorates his soul.*" It is reported, of John Rippon, sen., of *Upottery*, "that he is a man of the sweetest temper; and that good judges say he preaches better and better." Of *Kingstanley*, Gloucester, we read: "The church here is the most ancient Dissenting interest in Gloucester. Long before the Baptist meeting-house at Stanley was built, which stood eighty years, the pious people frequently worshipped in a wood belonging to Lord D. Morton, under the beech trees, in a certain spot which, to this day, is called the Gospel Beech." At *Lockerly*, Hants, "the pastor is dependent upon his daily labour, the people not advancing more than enough to keep the meeting-house in repair."

At *Calicote*, in Herts, the pastor, Alexander Thomson, labours as a gardener for the support of himself and wife, and receives £8 a year. *He is under the necessity of keeping a little horse;* and has the pleasure of saying that publick worship among his flock is better attended than in any former periods." At *Ashford*, Kent, "a great work of God has been going on this summer among the Militia who were stationed there, but are now removed to Folkstone. Forty or fifty have been baptized." At *Colne*, Lancashire, "Mr. John Stutterd, the pastor, has suffered *awfully* by the defection of those members that seemed to be pillars." There is another item from Lancashire, much more favourable than this:—"*Rochdale.*—They have a Sabbath evening lecture [in those days a rare thing]. It is well attended by a congregation entirely distinct from that of the day. Many creep in at night who would be ashamed to appear in the day."

In the same year of which this is recorded (1797), there is a brief account of the Northamptonshire Association being held in Leicester. Rev. B. Cave was at that time minister of

Harvey-lane Chapel. The Association, we are told, "met in Mr. John Deacon's meeting-house, Friar-lane (General Baptist), the minister and people who statedly assemble there kindly accommodating us with the use of it, as brother Cave's was too small to contain the congregation." It will, perhaps, surprise some of the Baptist ministers of that district, and of other districts also, to find that "the next day, Thursday, *the ministers related some leading parts of their religious experience during the past year.*"

The minister of *Lewes*, Sussex, writes to say, that "our deacons, Dicker and Larwill, now preach, I hope with much profit, to the country people, among whom they go on the Lord's-day;" and the minister of *Coventry*, John Butterworth, we learn, "went to London to collect money in payment of the debt on the meeting house, and bore the fatigue as well as could be expected."

There are two or three curious morsels from Yorkshire. The first relates to the minister at *Bradford*. "The aged father Crabtree is now getting feeble, and sometimes sits down once or twice in the course of his sermon; but great savour attends his prayers and all his discourses, and he preaches with as much zeal and animation as ever." The second refers to Mr. James Shuttleworth, of *Coerling Hill*. We are told, with the most charming frankness, that this minister "is a man of weak constitution, with a little income, a wife and ten children, *many of them very small!*" A friend also writes of Mr. William Hague, the minister of *Scarborough:* "Our beloved pastor is advancing in years, and almost blind. He is a zealous, faithful labourer in this corner of Christ's vineyard. He has a wife and three children at home. His last year's salary amounted to £30, which is the most we ever raised him."

One of the saddest pictures given by Mr. Rippon, refers to an aged Baptist minister living somewhere in Pembrokeshire. "How shall I describe," says the writer, "the poverty and distress of his miserable habitation? It had but one apartment. The floor was the sod. There was neither ceiling nor chimney,

so that the smoke dispersed through a hole in the shattered roof, and partly out of the door. The only provisions in the house were a little barley bread and oatmeal. A few potatoes were deemed a luxury. The poor old man, over eighty-five, was lying on a bed of straw, and the only covering he had was a miserable rug." Where, one is naturally tempted to ask, could have been the humanity, to say nothing of anything higher, of the wretched flock that thus permitted their old and infirm minister to perish in cold and hunger?

Of the other ministers who are singled out for special remark, two or three instances must suffice. The Rev. W. Clarke, of *Exeter*, is spoken of as a man remarkable for prudence and sweetness of temper. Surely Mr. Clarke's modesty must have suffered some shock when his virtues were thus paraded before the whole Denomination. Rev. John Tommas is described, as "an eminent preacher, *although* he never particularly distinguished himself in the press." We are at a loss to understand the reason for the conjunction. But the most singular comment is on the Rev. Thomas Mabbott, of *Biggleswade*, Beds. "As a preacher *he was much too loud and too long*, a habit rarely attended with such desirable effects as ministers are ready to expect; but it is ruinous to themselves, and often creates a disgust in the minds of even a serious audience, and mars the whole service." Poor Mr. Mabbott! he had gone to his rest before this public lecturing on his defects could produce either pain or profit.

There are two items about *deacons* that are sufficiently quaint to merit quoting. One refers to Mr. John Hall, a deacon of the church at *Hamsterly*, Devon. "He was a man never taken by surprise. However adverse any dispensation, he never said more than, '*It might have been worse.*' It was long remembered of him that when he had a crop of wheat so shaken by the wind that there was scarcely a grain of it left in the ear, upon taking hold of some, he said to the reapers, 'Well; it might have been worse. *Here is good straw left, for which we should be thank-*

ful!'" Verily, Mr. Hall was an exceptional farmer, to say the very least. The other is recorded of Mr. Davey, a deacon of *Chard*. "He had," so we are told, with imperturbable gravity, "nine children; and at or near the birth of each child he was favoured with an additional *cow* to his worldly substance; *so that he had as many cows as children*, and no more!"

The man who could pen these quaint and curious details was not destitute of humour; and one cannot but regret that only four volumes of the *Register* appeared. We have thereby lost many side glimpses, and some sad ones also, of the Baptist ministers and people of the close of the Eighteenth Century.

Catechising.

The celebrated Robert Robinson, of Cambridge, was one of several Baptist ministers who, a century ago, advocated and practised the public catechising of children and young persons seeking for fellowship with the churches. In December, 1761, Mr. Robinson writes:—"The Primitive Church was very wise in not receiving members too hastily. Their design was, to compose their assemblies of wise and good men. In order to this, they detained their proposed members some time in the state of catechumens, that is, catechised ones. In this state the pastor and elders used to instruct and prepare them for baptism. This discipline should be revived. Some, whose parents have discharged their duty to them, do not want this; but, alas! this is the case of very few. A society of catechumens should be formed voluntarily; the time of this state should be left to the discretion of the pastor. At the end, they should speak before the church, and be received, as now, by consent. The admission of members is a most essential act of discipline. It should never be precipitated, for innumerable evils follow. The greatest penetration and caution will be found little enough to prevent fatal consequences, and those may be received in haste, which destroy at leisure."

Referring to Robert Robinson's catechumenical system, Rev.

William Robinson says, "His entire plan would have embraced a large part of the congregation, divided into three classes; the first class consisting of children, servants, and grossly ignorant people; the second, of catechumens more especially, preparatory to baptism and the Lord's Supper; the third class being the church. Parts of this comprehensive scheme Mr. Robinson attempted to carry out, both in the town and surrounding villages. 'The children of Cambridge were appointed to meet the pastor every Thursday evening to say their catechism. Many attending, it was removed to the Lord's-day evening, when "The Assembly's Catechism" was explained; but the congregation soon became so numerous, that it was thought best to continue the meeting by preaching.' Such was the origin—but at what precise time is uncertain—of those Sunday evening services which drew crowds to the meeting-house, and brought down on offending gownsmen one of the cleverest and most scathing pieces of satire and rebuke by which impertinence was ever lashed."

"The children in the country villages," says Robt. Robinson, "were catechised once a month. They came to the pastor at his coming, that is, an hour or two before the public preaching at each village. To carry this mode of instruction on with success, it was necessary to give the catechisms, Bibles, Testaments, and hymn-books, &c., to the children, to allure or reward them. Several persons contributed to this expense; but the contributions being unequal to the charge, the pastor supported it as long as he could, and then was obliged to desist. Satisfied, however, that an infinite deal of good may be done this way, he determines, when a favourable opportunity offers, to revive it again. The labour, indeed, is very great, but the pleasure of rescuing souls from the empire of sin is greater still. The labour is surmounted by St. Paul's direction, 'Give thyself wholly to them.'"

Catechising their children had, apparently, once been not uncommon among the General Baptists, judging from the fol-

lowing minute adopted at a General Assembly in 1732: "That, whereas it hath appeared to this Assembly that there is a very great decay of holiness and piety in many of the members of the baptized churches and rising generation, which is, we esteem, owing to the want of family worship, and a pious and religious education of the children, 'tis therefore agreed by the members accordingly, and they do advise that such in the ministry do choose to treat on such a subject, or subjects, or purpose to exhort all their hearers to instruct and *catechise their children*, to endeavour to bring them up in the nurture and fear of the Lord, and to acquaint them betimes with the doctrines and principles of the Gospel; and likewise to choose another subject, or subjects, to exhort their hearers to maintain family worship, in family and secret prayer and praise to God, and continually to visit and encourage their members and others to the practice of those good duties, and to inquire whether they put the same in practice; and that these things be recommended to the rest of the churches that are now absent."*

Two scraps of information on the subject of catechising are to be found in Rippon's *Register*. The first is a resolution passed at the Midland Association held at Bond-street Chapel, Birmingham, in 1793. It is as follows: "Agreed, that we recommend parents and ministers belonging to the different societies to renew the ancient and advantageous practice of catechising the children of their respective families and congregations." The second occurs in recording the fact that Mr. Thorpe, the minister of Wall-street Chapel, London, in 1807, had preached "the annual sermons in commemoration of the great storm on the 26th November. We understand that our young brother, Mr. Thorpe," says the chronicler, "according to the pointed advice given to him at his ordination, has begun the work of catechising the children of his congregation, a work now much neglected, but from which the genuine Protestant Dissenters have derived peculiar advantages in better times."

* *MS. Proceedings of the Assembly*, vol. iii. p. 9.

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